

# Selected works of Jawaharlal Nehru

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IN ENGLAND, 1938



# **Selected works of Jawaharlal Nehru**

• Volume Nine

A Project of the  
Jawaharlal Nehru  
Memorial Fund



Orient Longman



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Published by  
Sujit Mukherjee  
Orient Longman Ltd

Regd. Office  
3/5 Asaf Ali Road New Delhi 110002

Regional Offices  
Kamani Marg Ballard Estate Bombay 400038  
17 Chittaranjan Avenue Calcutta 700072  
36A Mount Road Madras 600002  
1/24 Asaf Ali Road New Delhi 110002  
80/1 Mahatma Gandhi Road Bangalore 560001  
3-5-820 Hyderguda Hyderabad 500001  
S.P. Verma Road Patna 800001

Printed at  
Indraprastha Press (CBT)  
Nehru House New Delhi 110002

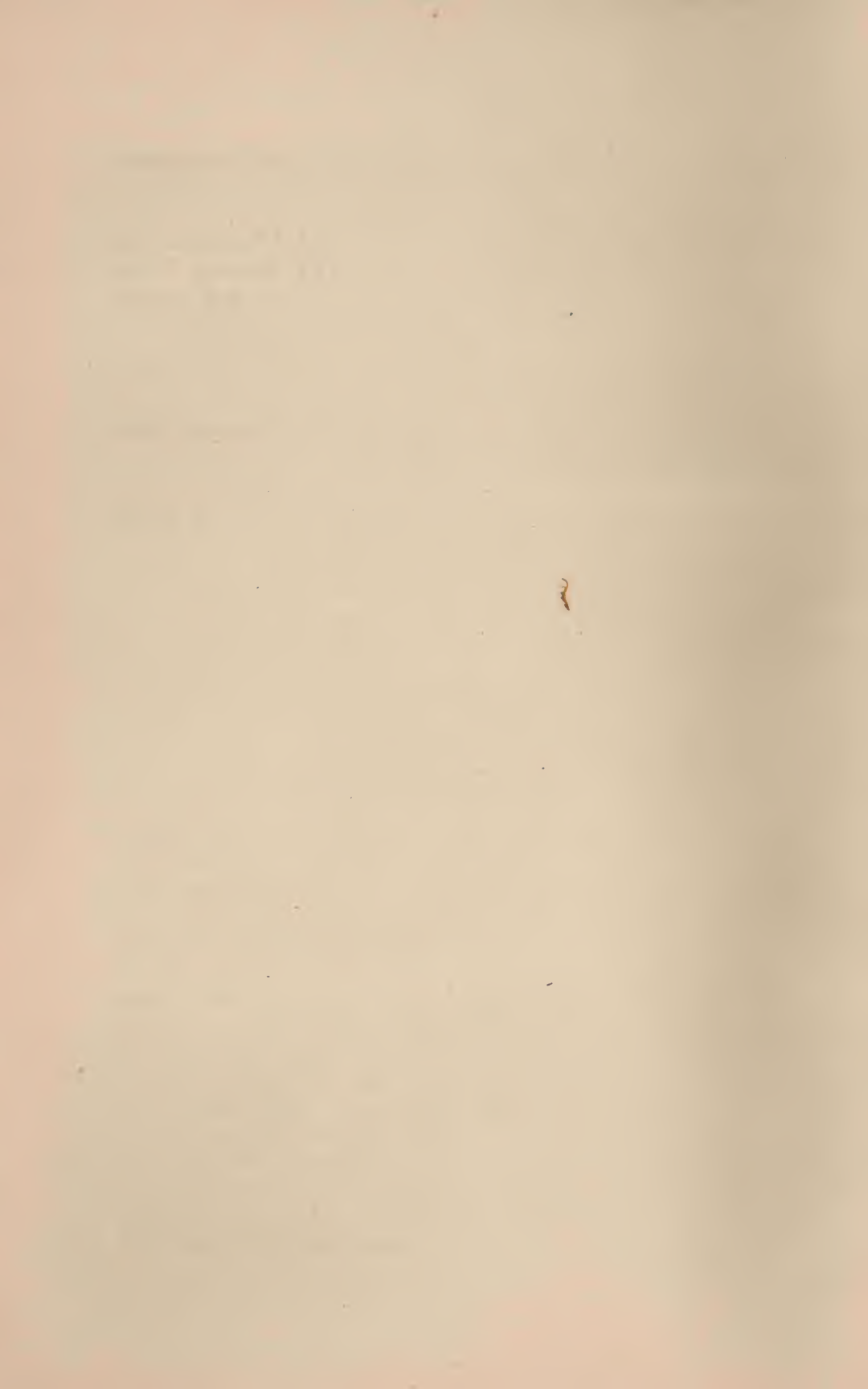


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## FOREWORD

Jawaharlal Nehru is one of the key figures of the twentieth century. He symbolised some of the major forces which have transformed our age.

When Jawaharlal Nehru was young, history was still the privilege of the West; the rest of the world lay in deliberate darkness. The impression given was that the vast continents of Asia and Africa existed merely to sustain their masters in Europe and North America. Jawaharlal Nehru's own education in Britain could be interpreted, in a sense, as an attempt to secure for him a place within the pale. His letters of the time are evidence of his sensitivity, his interest in science and international affairs as well as of his pride in India and Asia. But his personality was veiled by his shyness and a facade of nonchalance, and perhaps outwardly there was not much to distinguish him from the ordinary run of men. Gradually there emerged the warm and universal being who became intensely involved with the problems of the poor and the oppressed in all lands. In doing so, Jawaharlal Nehru gave articulation and leadership to millions of people in his own country and in Asia and Africa.

That imperialism was a curse which should be lifted from the brows of men, that poverty was incompatible with civilisation, that nationalism should be poised on a sense of international community and that it was not sufficient to brood on these things when action was urgent and compelling—these were the principles which inspired and gave vitality to Jawaharlal Nehru's activities in the years of India's struggle for freedom and made him not only an intense nationalist but one of the leaders of humanism.

No particular ideological doctrine could claim Jawaharlal Nehru for its own. Long days in jail were spent in reading widely. He drew much from the thought of the East and West and from the philosophies of the past and the present. Never religious in the formal sense, yet he had a deep love for the culture and tradition of his own land. Never a rigid Marxist, yet he was deeply influenced by that theory and was particularly impressed by what he saw in the Soviet Union on his first visit in 1927. However, he realised that the world was too complex, and man had too many facets, to be encompassed by any single or total explanation. He himself was a socialist with an abhorrence of

regimentation and a democrat who was anxious to reconcile his faith in civil liberty with the necessity of mitigating economic and social wretchedness. His struggles, both within himself and with the outside world, to adjust such seeming contradictions are what make his life and work significant and fascinating.

As a leader of free India, Jawaharlal Nehru recognised that his country could neither stay out of the world nor divest itself of its own interests in world affairs. But to the extent that it was possible, Jawaharlal Nehru sought to speak objectively and to be a voice of sanity in the shrill phases of the 'cold war'. Whether his influence helped on certain occasions to maintain peace is for the future historian to assess. What we do know is that for a long stretch of time he commanded an international audience reaching far beyond governments, that he spoke for ordinary, sensitive, thinking men and women around the globe and that his was a constituency which extended far beyond India.

So the story of Jawaharlal Nehru is that of a man who evolved, who grew in storm and stress till he became the representative of much that was noble in his time. It is the story of a generous and gracious human being who summed up in himself the resurgence of the 'third world' as well as the humanism which transcends dogmas and is adapted to the contemporary context. His achievement, by its very nature and setting, was much greater than that of a Prime Minister. And it is with the conviction that the life of this man is of importance not only to scholars but to all, in India and elsewhere, who are interested in the valour and compassion of the human spirit that the Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund has decided to publish a series of volumes consisting of all that is significant in what Jawaharlal Nehru spoke and wrote. There is, as is to be expected in the speeches and writings of a man so engrossed in affairs and gifted with expression, much that is ephemeral; this will be omitted. The official letters and memoranda will also not find place here. But it is planned to include everything else and the whole corpus should help to remind us of the quality and endeavour of one who was not only a leader of men and a lover of mankind, but a completely integrated human being.

*Indira Gandhi*

New Delhi  
18 January 1972

Chairman  
Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund



## EDITORIAL NOTE

This volume covers the period of just over twelve months, from June 1938 to July 1939. Not happy with the performance of the Congress ministries in the provinces, Jawaharlal Nehru sailed for Europe to study at first-hand the growing strength of Nazism and fascism and the consequential drift, despite the British policy of appeasement, towards war. He visited Spain, Britain, France and Czechoslovakia, and his letters, memoranda and despatches to the *National Herald*, the newspaper started under his guidance in September 1938, reveal his concern and clear understanding. He tirelessly reiterated the need to challenge aggression and to curb the gangsterism that was striding across Europe. But little could be expected from the British Government which was dominated by imperialist and class interests. So, even if finally Britain was driven to war, she could not expect any support from the Indian National Congress. A whole-hearted commitment to progressive forces against the reactionary elements that were dominant in Europe could not mean that a shackled India would fight on the side of diehard British conservatism. Only a free India could support the cause of world freedom and democracy with full enthusiasm.

On his return to India in November 1938, Jawaharlal did not lose sight of the international situation and organized the despatch of food supplies to Spain and medical aid to China. But developments in India soon forced their attention on him. However disappointed Jawaharlal might have been with the provincial Congress ministries, he recognized the unfairness of Jinnah's charges of discrimination against the Muslims and sought in vain for a clarification of these vague allegations so that they could be properly investigated. Meantime, there developed the clash in the leadership of the Congress between Mahatma Gandhi and Subhas Bose. An effort to keep this clash above the level of personal squabbles and to secure a settlement which would be fair to both sides only resulted in bitter criticism and accusation.

In these dismal months, painful from both the personal and the larger, national points of view, there were two forms of activity which gave Jawaharlal some satisfaction. He was closely involved with the popular awakening in the Indian states and helped to integrate this movement with the main struggle for Indian independence. He also, as chairman of the newly formed National Planning Committee, was able to start the

work of formulating plans for the India of the future, which would comprise a socialist economy within a democratic society.

Much of the material in this volume has been selected from the papers of Jawaharlal Nehru. The cooperation extended by the Director and the staff of the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library is acknowledged.

Shri V.V. Giri has permitted us to consult his papers. The National Archives of India has authorised us to utilize material in its possession. *The Bombay Chronicle*, *The Hindustan Times*, *The Tribune*, *The Leader*, the *National Herald* and *The Hindu* have allowed us to reprint the texts of speeches, statements and editorials first published by them. The Asia Publishing House has permitted us to reprint one letter from *A Bunch of Old Letters*. The letter to Abdul Latif on 22 January 1939 has been taken from the facsimile in *Latif ki Kahani* (Bijnor, 1964). The frontispiece and the photograph of Jawaharlal with British Labour leaders have been received from Leonard Barnes, the photograph with the delegates of the Wafd Party from Tarak Nath Das, and that with Subhas Bose at Sodepur from the Netaji Research Bureau, Calcutta.



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## IN EUROPE



## 1. To Basil Mathews<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
January 30, 1938

Dear Basil Mathews,<sup>2</sup>

I am grateful to you for your few lines of sympathy which you have sent me.<sup>3</sup>

I am thinking of visiting Europe next summer if I can possibly manage it. I feel tired. More so mentally than physically and it is not possible for me to find any kind of rest or even much of a change in India. If I go to Europe perhaps I might have the good fortune of meeting you there.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-5(Pt. 4)/1938, p. 637, N.M.M.L.

2. Basil Joseph Mathews (1879-1951); connected with British missionary societies; author of many books including *India Reveals Herself* and *The Church Takes Root in India*.

3. On the death of Jawaharlal's mother.

## 2. To Agatha Harrison<sup>1</sup>

Camp Wardha  
February 2, 1938

Dear Agatha,

Thank you for your letters<sup>2</sup> and the cutting<sup>3</sup> which Cushman sent you. I am writing a few lines to Cushman.

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. She wrote to Jawaharlal that Subhas Bose's talks with Zetland, Stewart and Halifax had made a deep impression. He had been very frank with them and they were under no delusion as to the situation or to the determined front against federation.

3. The cutting was of an article by Walter Lippmann, in *New York Herald Tribune*.



I arrived here today for the Working Committee meeting. Subhas Bose has also just come, but he has gone out to spend the night at Shegaon and so I have had no chance to talk with him yet.

The more I think of it the more I feel like going to Europe next summer. It is true that the position here is getting extraordinarily complicated and one does not like to shirk responsibility at a time of difficulty. But I feel stale and it seems a little difficult even to carry on till the next Congress. I must freshen up and I do not see myself doing it in India. I should, in any case, like to see Indu. To ask her to come to India in summer would mean that she would have the worst time of the year in India. It would be possible of course for me to take her for a week or two to some out of the way place in the hills, or even to Kashmir, where I have been wanting to go for a long while. But wherever I might go people would come to me and I would have little peace. So I suppose I had best see her in Europe.

Yours very sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

### 3. To V. K. Krishna Menon<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
April 28, 1938

My dear Krishna,  
Your letter of the 18th about my visit. As I am leaving Bombay on the 2nd June, I ought to reach London certainly by the 20th. About my stay, please make such arrangements as you think desirable. You might consult Indira. It is obviously not possible for me to make any arrangements directly. I do not like the idea of any formal reception being given to me by a reception committee formed for the purpose. Therefore no such committee need be formed. So far as my programme is concerned, you must make yourself responsible for it, acting of course in consultation with various odd groups and individuals. Every attempt should be made not to irritate any group. Probably it will be desirable to have a purely Indian meeting and an informal one where I can meet our countrymen. I should like to visit Oxford and Cambridge, particularly Oxford, before the term ends, if that is possible. About the

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L. Extracts.

set public meetings in London, I view the prospect with distaste. Perhaps one such meeting might be necessary, but why three?

I have fixed no programme in my mind about the Continent. But I should like to spend a good bit of my time there. I had intended going to Austria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and perhaps even Turkey. I do not know how far recent events will interfere with this. Of course, I should like to spend some time in Paris. Scandinavia is rather out of the way though it is attractive. Spain I would like to visit. I do not know if that will be possible or desirable....

I have been vaguely thinking of returning to India overland *via* the Russian and Central Asian republics. These Central Asian republics attract me very much. But all this is rather vague and perhaps it had better remain vague till I reach London and have a talk with you and other people. Much will depend on the international situation then.

Yours affectionately,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

#### 4. To Agatha Harrison<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
May 9, 1938

Dear Agatha,

On my return today from a visit to the mountains of Garhwal I have received your letter of April 30th.<sup>2</sup> I agree with you that the situation in England and India is different from what it was two or three years ago. I cannot therefore adopt the same attitude as I did on the last occasion I visited England. On the last occasion, I made it more or less of a rule not to see people who were officially connected with the British Government. I do not propose to do that this time. But I must say that I am not keen on making any advances towards them. If any of them desires to meet me and this meeting can be conveniently arranged, I shall not object. I am writing on these lines to Krishna Menon also.

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. She wrote that unlike his last visit to London, Jawaharlal should not during his proposed visit refuse to meet persons holding key positions relating to India.

I had written to Indu about Lord Lothian's invitation. Her personal reaction to it was not favourable as she objects strongly to Lothian's pro-fascist politics. I have however written to Lothian that I shall gladly go to Blickling. As for the date, this might be fixed up in consultation with Krishna Menon.

I do not know when I shall go to Paris. I shall not go there on my way to London from Genoa.

Yours very sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

## 5. India Cannot Stand Aloof<sup>1</sup>

Events are moving fast in the world. One does not know when the world map might be altered. India cannot stand aloof. We should establish better contacts with foreign countries and more of us should visit them. I am worried at the news of the imminent danger of war and the aggressive postures of certain countries. These countries do not even attempt to conceal these postures. One does not know when a world war might take place. And what would India do then? The Congress is the only effective organisation which would be able to face such difficulties. Therefore, the Congress should further strengthen itself lest it may be found wanting. In ten or twelve days I will leave India for four months, but my programme is not yet settled since the conditions are changing fast.

The labour trouble in Cawnpore is an old one. Since the Congress took up the reins of the government, the labourers had had some hopes and their power also increased. The government appointed an enquiry committee under the chairmanship of Babu Rajendra Prasad whose findings<sup>2</sup> were accepted by the labourers, but were rejected by the employers'

1. Speech at Lucknow, 24 May 1938. From *The Tribune*, 26 May 1938.

2. The Labour Enquiry Committee recommended a general increase in wages of labourers, grant of bonus, establishment of a labour exchange under the control of the government and mazdur sabha, a contributory provident fund scheme and grant of holidays to workers.



association. The latter had used strong, rude and unseemly language against the committee and exhibited only passion and anger but no reason. Employers do not want to part with any part of their exorbitant income. I admit that the labourers have blundered in not waiting for the government's decision on the report and deciding on a lightning strike. I believe that if the employers had also rejected the government's decision,<sup>3</sup> the labourers' case would have become strong. I admit that the labourers were exasperated by their continued victimisation, the apathy of the employers and this wholesale rejection of the committee's findings. The strike affects Hindus and Muslims alike. It concerns us all as it would affect the labourers all over India, as also the fight for freedom. I appeal to the public to render them all possible help.

I have a feeling that public meetings are treated as a *tamasha*. I, however, attach great importance to them. It is really tantalising that while we spend all our time and energy to serve you, we should get in return only your love and affection. I, therefore, urge upon you to properly understand the suggestions that are made and give practical shape to them.

The recent Shia-Sunni trouble<sup>4</sup> in Lucknow and the communal riots in several places are to be regretted. This is not the way to face bigger problems confronting us. It is disappointing to find that we waste our energy over minor issues. Communal troubles have really no religious background but are rather political in nature. We cannot easily get at the root of communal troubles. But one thing is certain. The impression has gone round that the Congress government would allow all kinds of news to be published. We must put a stop to such a gross misrepresentation of our policy and remove the fear and misunderstanding from the public mind.

Recently the Mysore Government resorted to firing on the people. There is a great agitation going on in the states. People there are worried lest they may be left behind.

3. The U.P. Government had endorsed the recommendations of the Labour Enquiry Committee.

4. In Lucknow, on 22 April 1938, two persons were killed and twenty eight injured in a clash between Shia and Sunni Muslims.



## 6. To Shankarrao Deo<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad

26.5.38

My dear Shankarraoji,

I have just received your letter of the 24th.<sup>2</sup> Will you kindly convey to the German consul in Bombay my thanks for his kind invitation to me to include Germany in my European tour? I am afraid it is difficult for me to fix up anything about my tour from here as arrangements are entirely in the hands of my friends at the other end, and I do not want to do anything which might overlap or conflict with these arrangements. On my arrival in Europe I shall finally fix up my programme.

I hope to reach Poona on the 28th night and visit Panchgani on the 29th.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. In his letter of 24 May 1938, he passed on an inquiry from the German consul in Bombay whether Jawaharlal could visit Germany on an official invitation.

## 7. The Object of the Visit<sup>1</sup>

I have no particular object in view in visiting Europe this year. For some time past I have been thinking of going there so as to renew contacts and study changes in the situation there, on the spot. I think it is desirable for some of our public men to visit foreign countries from time to time for mutual advantage of both parties concerned. We cannot isolate ourselves in the world today. We must understand it and try to influence events as far as we can.

Another object of my visit is to meet my daughter. I have so far made no plans and have left my programme to some friends in Europe. On arrival in England I shall fix up my programme definitely. I should like to return to India by the overland route and not by sea.

1. Statement to the press, Allahabad, 27 May 1938. *The Leader*, 29 May 1938.

## 8. Farewell Message to India<sup>1</sup>

My beloved countrymen, I go to Europe with the authority and on behalf of the Congress. I hope I shall deserve the hope and trust you have reposed in me. I may come back as soon as possible. But the fight for freedom must proceed as relentlessly as ever.

It is up to you to hold the banner of the Congress aloft and under its banner swear that you will not take rest until the battle of freedom is won.

I am going to Europe with a purpose and hope to return within a few months after visiting Spain, England, France and, if possible, some other countries, including Russia and America. Our nation, consisting of 350 millions of people, is pitted against one of the worst types of imperialism, namely British imperialism. It is engrossed in the life and death struggle for independence. Our people are determined to win Swaraj which is their birthright, and that accounts for the growing strength of the Congress.

I am fully confident that the people of India will keep the flag of Indian nationalism flying for ever. Swaraj is much more near to us today than ever, and so let the fight be strengthened.

1. Speech at Bombay, 2 June 1938. *The Hindustan Times*, 3 June 1938.

## 9. To J. B. Kripalani<sup>1</sup>

S.S. Biancamano  
12/6/38

My dear Jivat,

I enclose a typed letter. I shall be grateful if you will have copies of this sent to the President and all the members of the Working Committee. I want to keep them in touch with my activities abroad and I propose therefore to send you periodical letters of this kind. They are not meant for publication but you can exercise your discretion and give publicity to any particular fact or part of the letters. Please show the

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-1(K.W. V)/1938, p. 58, N.M.M.L. Extracts.

letters to Lohia also. I am sending a copy direct to Bapu and a copy to Vijayalakshmi.

During the voyage I have been surrounded by an atmosphere of friendliness and, to some extent, even respect. Partly this is due to many passengers having read my book but really it is due to an appreciation of the growing strength of the Indian people. The welcomes I got at out of the way places *en route* impressed people greatly. At Massawa I had a more enthusiastic welcome than the official welcome organised for the Viceroy of Ethiopia,<sup>2</sup> who by the way is a very delightful person. He is, I think, the nephew of the king of Italy.

Will you please tell Lohia that a very new and interesting leftist magazine is coming out in America called *Ken*? It has fine articles about Europe, China, etc., and the pictures are splendid. It comes out once a fortnight and costs 25 cents each copy....

Love,

Yours,  
Jawahar

2. The Duke of Aosta, cousin of King Victor Emmanuel, had been appointed Viceroy of Ethiopia in succession to Marshal Graziani in November 1937.

## 10. A Letter from the Mediterranean<sup>1</sup>

S. S. Biancamano  
June 11/13, 1938

Our voyage is nine days' old already and in another three days' time we reach Genoa and disembark. It has been a pleasant voyage. The Indian Ocean was a little choppy. This did not affect me at all but it affected a considerable number of passengers who remained in the bowels of the ship for several days and then suddenly appeared as we approached the Red Sea. The Indian Ocean was close and sticky—that is the weather was so—the Red Sea was cooler and pleasanter than is usually the case. We are now in the Mediterranean and it is chilly.

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-71/1938, pp. 17 (a-i), N.M.M.L. Enclosure to the preceding item.



We have a varied assortment of passengers on board—people from China and Japan, from India and those picked up from Italian Somaliland. Italians predominate and there are Chinese, Americans, English, Swedes, Danes, etc., and Indians. The English are not much in evidence. There is an Italian mission, under the leadership of an ambassador, which is returning from Japan, Manchuria and North China (the areas under Japanese occupation). This was a mission of goodwill to Japan with a business and industrial side to it. A small group of Chinese are going to Geneva for the labour conferences there.

Our ship stopped at Assab, which is not usually a port of call, to pick up the Duke of Aosta, the Italian Viceroy of Ethiopia, and his mother, the Dowager Duchess. It stopped next at Massawa in Eritrea (Italian Somaliland) and many fresh passengers came on board, almost all Italians. Suaz and Port Said were the subsequent stops.

At Massawa, a number of Indian merchants and their wives had gathered together on the quay to welcome me. They were Gujarati Hindus and Muslims from western India—all Gujarati-speaking. Many of them had travelled long distances from the interior (from Asmara) especially for the purpose. Unfortunately, no one was allowed to land from the ship owing to some medical regulations, but a few Indians managed to get special permission from the local governor to board the ship, in order to see me. The rest of the crowd remained standing for hours in the hot sun on the quay. They gave me a rousing welcome which evidently impressed both the passengers and the Italian authorities. They shouted our well-known slogans and sported our national colours.

The small deputation of Indians—Muslim and Hindu—that came to see me on board at Massawa, complained to me of various disabilities they were suffering from and how the Italian Government was trying to squeeze them out. Many of them had been settled there for thirty years or more and had prospered. Trade was practically in their hands as the Somalis were backward, and the Italians were not well acquainted with the language and ways of the inhabitants.

I was told that the relations of the Indian merchants with the Somalis were excellent. Even with the Italian authorities, their relations were outwardly good. (I might mention that the Duke of Aosta subsequently spoke in good terms to me of the Indian merchants in that part of the country and even added that sometimes the Italian authorities borrowed money from them.) The merchants told me that since the Ethiopian campaign<sup>2</sup> and the introduction of economic sanctions against Italy,

2. See *Selected Works*, Vol. 6, p. 454.



all imports from foreign countries other than Italy, had been stopped. Trade was thus confined to Italy and Italian goods. They put up with that, of course, as it was not possible for them to affect Italian policy in this respect. What they objected to was the new policy of pushing Indian merchants away whenever opportunity offered itself. Thus when an Indian merchant went to India, he must come back within a fixed period or he could not return at all. Newcomers were not welcomed or even permitted. There were a number of other disabilities which I need not mention here. The merchants asked me to move the Congress to take up this matter with the Italian Government. I explained to them that we could not do much in view of the international situation. Still, we could give publicity in India and I suggested to them to send a full memorandum to the foreign department of the A.I.C.C. They have promised to do so and I hope the foreign department will keep in touch with them and take such steps as it may consider necessary. The memorandum they will send will be in Gujarati. They know some English and can speak Italian and Hindustani but they feel at home in Gujarati only.

We may not be able to do much for these outlying colonies of Indians, but I do feel that we must keep up contacts with them. Their eagerness to meet me and display their solidarity with the national struggle in India was pleasing and encouraging. And in this welcome the Muslims took the lead, as they appeared to be the most important merchants there. Even my passage through their port of Massawa became an event in their lives as it brought them in personal touch with our struggle for freedom. It was evident that they had faith in the Congress and its leaders. I had a short talk with these Indian merchants and I told them of our recent success in Zanzibar and of the position in India and abroad.

As in Massawa, there are innumerable groups of Indians scattered all over the world who look to India. Even an occasional letter from our foreign department would cheer them up greatly, for they will feel then that India also remembers them and cares for them.

Many passengers in ships, passing through the Suez Canal, often manage to pay a brief visit to Cairo. I had decided not to do so. But three hours before reaching Suez, I received a marconigram from Cairo conveying to me the welcome of the Wafd Party<sup>3</sup> and requesting me to get off at Suez and proceed from there by private aeroplane, which

3. An Egyptian political party founded in 1918 by Zaghlul Pasha to press Egyptian demand for independence; dissolved along with other parties in January 1953.

had been chartered, to Alexandria to meet Nahas Pasha. I decided to accept this invitation and cabled accordingly. But the time was short and my cable reached too late. So when I disembarked at Suez there was no one to meet me. Through the good offices of Reuter's agent there, who had come to interview me, I engaged a car and went off to Cairo, reaching there at 9.30 p.m. on the 9th June. At 11.30 p.m. that same evening I was at last traced down by the person representing the Wafd. It was arranged that early next morning I should fly to Alexandria, spend some hours with Nahas Pasha and other Wafdist leaders, and then fly to Port Said to catch my boat the same day. Then long after midnight, I paid a visit to the pyramids and the Sphinx which looked very impressive in the moonlight.

On the 10th morning, we flew to Alexandria. There I met Nahas Pasha and a number of prominent leaders of the Wafd Party, including several ex-cabinet ministers. These included Makram Ebeid Pasha,<sup>4</sup> Secretary-General of the Wafd and ex-Minister of Finance, Mahomoud Bassouring Bey, ex-President of the senate, Naquib Hilaly Bey,<sup>5</sup> ex-Minister of Education, Saby Abu Allam Bey, ex-Minister of Justice, Abdul Fattab Tawil Bey,<sup>6</sup> ex-Minister of Health. We had two hours talk and then had to consume an enormous and magnificent lunch for another hour.

Our talk ranged over many subjects. Nahas Pasha and Makram Pasha told me of developments in Egypt. I told them of the position in India, and then we discussed briefly international affairs. There was nothing very new in what I was told about the Egyptian situation but certain interesting and instructive facts came to light.

I began by conveying the greetings of the Congress and of the Indian people to Nahas Pasha and to the Wafd Party which had carried on for many years the struggle for Egyptian freedom. I told them how deeply we were interested in this and how we had followed it, as far as we could, for we looked upon it as part of the great world struggle for freedom. Between Egypt and us there were many other bonds also and our opponent was the same imperialism. Nahas Pasha reciprocated these sentiments and said that they had looked upon the Indian struggle and its leaders with admiration. He reminded me of the attempts he had made in 1931 to meet and do honour to Gandhiji as the great leader of the fight for Indian independence. He had arranged a great

4. A Copt and the principal lieutenant of Nahas Pasha; left the Wafd Party in 1943.

5. Later left the Wafd Party; served as Prime Minister of Egypt from January to June 1952.

6. Minister for Public Health and Social Affairs in 1942; later held the portfolios of justice and communications.



party in his honour at Heliopolis, near Cairo, and issued invitations for five hundred guests to it, but the then government would not permit it. He had then tried to meet him at Port Said. Again, the government would not allow him to go on board or Gandhiji to set foot on Egyptian soil. In this way all his attempts to meet Gandhiji had been frustrated and he could not convey personally, as he desired, the greetings and admiration of the Egyptian people to the people of India, through their great leader. Those were black days for Egypt, he said, and unhappily they had returned more or less to them again and present conditions were very bad. The Wafd was as popular as ever with the *fallaheen*,<sup>7</sup> but the palace clique, aided by British imperialism, dominated the scene. The recent elections<sup>8</sup> had been accompanied by the most shameless intimidation and falsification of election returns. They were producing soon a black book on these elections. (I might add that from independent testimony, previous to this, both from English and French sources, there was a great deal of truth in this charge.)

I put it to Nahas Pasha that such tactics had always to be faced by a nationalist or a social movement struggling for freedom. Every device and method of oppression was employed by imperialism and reactionary cliques and vested interests. Unless the movement itself had sufficient strength, it could not cope with such tactics. Strength only could come from organised mass support. It therefore seemed to me that the Wafd did not have this organised mass support, for otherwise it would not weaken so rapidly because of palace intrigues. He admitted that there was some truth in this although the Wafd was still very popular with the masses. The Wafd leaders had thought that with their treaty with Britain, the independence struggle had practically ended in their success, and they had thrown themselves enthusiastically into the task of preaching Anglo-Egyptian friendship. As a government, they became absorbed in the work of the government and neglected their organisation and agitational work. This ultimately weakened the Wafd and when the time for a trial of strength came, they were unable to rise to the occasion. They had been over-confident, too full of faith in the *bona fides* of the British Government, not in sufficient touch with the masses.

As a matter of fact it is quite clear that the Wafd Party, while it was in power, did little or nothing for the peasantry. They were afraid of

7. Peasants.

8. In the elections held in April 1938, the Wafdists were heavily defeated and a coalition government of Liberals, Saadists and dissident Wafdists was confirmed in office.



alienating the big landlords as well as the palace. The royal family actually owns over ten per cent of the land in Egypt. It used to own much more. Over fifty per cent of this land is owned by a handful of people. These big landlords put a brake on the Wafd's activities and at the same time organised themselves under the shelter of the palace, to oppose the Wafd. The palace succeeded in creating a split in the Wafd. One group started criticising the main party on the ground that it was not advanced enough and was too friendly to the British. As a matter of fact this was a ruse, for this dissentient group consisted chiefly of the big landlord elements and it has subsequently cooperated fully with the palace group and even, to some extent, with the British.

The Wafd would not have been much affected by this if it had a powerful organisation behind it. But it had neglected this and thought of itself more as a government. The great fall in cotton prices was exploited by the opponents of the Wafd against them as if they were responsible for it. This had some effect on the peasantry. All this and other causes led to the defeat of the Wafd. But the real reason is the inherent weakness of the party. It is definitely an upper middle class party with a certain mass support but with no roots among the masses. Even the middle classes in Egypt have not grown sufficiently (less than in India); and such as exist are largely tied up with foreign interests. There is no real agrarian movement, no labour movement at all (trade unions are not permitted by law), and the whole outlook of the Wafd has been moderate and somewhat primitive. Oppressed by the physical force behind the palace and the British, they have thought in terms of raising trained volunteers to protect themselves. I understand that the Wafd were contemplating trade union legislation when they were thrown out of office.

We discussed the Indian movement and how it had been based on nonviolence. We considered the practical sides of it, apart from its moral aspects. We had a much harder task in India than the Wafdists in Egypt. The British were comparatively new in Egypt and although they had taken control of all the important and key positions, they still had not gone deep down to the roots. In India, they had dug themselves in during the last century and a half. We were disarmed as the Egyptians and had no means at our disposal to oppose violence with violence. Indeed it was manifest that the state's apparatus of coercion could not be successfully opposed anywhere by violent methods. The state had now a terrific superiority in this respect. And yet unless we could counter it and neutralise it by effective sanctions, we would remain helpless. It was only by our strength that we could progress. I pointed out how

we had developed strength by our peaceful methods and how the British Government, with all its coercive apparatus, had been unable to crush it. The Wafdists were greatly interested in my account, both of this method and of the development of our national movement during the past twenty years.

Then I told them of how and why we accepted ministries. The fact that some of our biggest leaders did not go into ministries, and also our rule that ministers should not belong to Congress executives, interested them greatly. They had had to face similar problems and they had decided differently. Of course conditions were different here but some of them were beginning to feel that the Congress policy had been a wise one.

We talked of many matters and I cannot write in detail or else this letter will never end. I tried to explain to them the background of our struggle, of how our main aim had been to put backbone and character into our people, to organise and discipline them, to lay stress on the means and high standards in public life, to forego even a present minor advantage if that conflicted with the principles we adhered to, and always to think and act in terms of the masses. Without the masses we were helpless and even independence meant to us the removal of the poverty and distress of our people and raising them to higher levels. I pointed out, of course, that we had not always lived up to our ideals and principles, we had made mistakes, showed weakness, and yet those ideals had helped us greatly in preventing us from straying too often and too far. And the success that had come to us had really been remarkable. Perhaps I exaggerated, as I am apt to do, when I talk to foreigners about our movement. Also when I am out of India, our day to day difficulties fade away and the major achievements and problems stand out. Anyway I impressed them considerably.

We discussed briefly the Hindu-Muslim problem in India and they expressed their great regret at the fact that some Muslims were not throwing their full weight into the national struggle and were creating difficulties.

We then went on to international affairs and I pointed out how India was thinking more and more of her own struggle in relation to struggles for freedom elsewhere. We realised that our own future was partly tied up with this. We had, therefore, definitely taken sides, in so far as an expression of opinion and sympathy went, in various external struggles such as in Ethiopia, Spain, China and, of course, in countries where a nationalist struggle for independence was going on. We had gone further and opposed fascism and generally but vaguely allied ourselves with the non-fascist forces. I mentioned our association with the



International Peace Campaign<sup>9</sup> and of how this had brought us nearer to the progressive and anti-fascist forces in the world. Although still a subject country, India, because of the inner strength she had gained and her widening outlook, was already playing some part, however small, in international affairs. Our prestige abroad was increasing and it was generally recognised that our independence could not long be delayed and, when freed, India would play an important part in world affairs.

Two hours were not sufficient for our conversation and we had to end it hurriedly. The question was put to me of how closer contacts could be established between Egypt and India, the Wafd and the Congress. I said that we would do all we could to have such contacts. The first thing to do was for the headquarters of the Wafd and the A.I.C.C. office to get into touch with each other and to exchange all publications, reports, etc. The next step might be sending delegations. I extended a cordial invitation on behalf of the Congress to Nahas Pasha and his colleagues of the Wafd to visit India, and they assured me that they would very much like to accept it and send a delegation. They inquired about a suitable time for this. I suggested January or February so that they might attend the Congress session, but I added that they would be welcome at any time. May I suggest that an official invitation be extended to Nahas Pasha and the Wafd by the President of the Congress?

Among the Wafdist leaders I found Makram Pasha to be the most intelligent and with a grasp of wider issues. He is a Copt.

After my interview with the Wafdist leaders we flew from Alexandria to Port Said. At the aerodrome, a number of Egyptians representing the local Wafd welcomed me, also some Indian merchants. We were pressed for time to catch our boat and could not stay but still we were given a rousing welcome in the streets of Port Said.

We have many interesting passengers on board and I have had frequent talks with them. The Duke of Aosta, the new Viceroy of Ethiopia, is a very charming man. He is about forty but is still very school-boyish and entirely unaffected and simple. His chief grievance in life seems to be that he has to put up with ceremonials.

The Italian mission to Japan has several agreeable and interesting members. They are full of praises for Japan of course, and they had tried to point out to me the virtues of the fascist regime. They knew my views. Some passengers possess my books and these have been going round, and the Italians have been reading my views on Mussolini and fascism. They were not to their liking but they took them in

9. See *Selected Works*, Vol. 7, pp. 576-577.



good part. I explained to them at length what we have been doing in India, laying special stress on our nonviolent technique. They seemed to be impressed. It is extraordinary to notice among the Italians, and sometimes among others also, their firm faith in the decline of the British race and in the approaching collapse of the British Empire.

The Chinese passengers are quiet and retiring and keep largely to themselves. I have had talks with them about our China medical unit and other matters.

June 13th

We have just left Naples and are on the last lap of our journey by sea. Early tomorrow morning we shall reach Genoa. At Naples there was an imposing display of the Italian royal family, generals, fascist leaders, militia, bands, etc., to welcome the Duke of Aosta. The Italian mission to Japan also disembarked here. After the reception was over, we got down and spent some hours in Naples.

Soon after our boat reached Naples harbour, a customs official came to me and informed me that he had been instructed by the ministry in Rome to help me in getting my luggage through the customs and in any other way that he could. In case I disembarked at Genoa, instructions had been sent to the customs authorities there also.

Among the letters I received at Naples was one from the Marquis of Zetland. This was a cordial letter from his private address. He wrote to say that he would greatly welcome the opportunity of meeting me if I felt disposed to have a talk. I shall send him a reply after I see my programme.

In Naples I met Sardar Ajit Singh<sup>10</sup> who has been an exile from India for over thirty years. I met him previously in Switzerland. He is very keen on going back to India and probably the government will permit him to do so. He lived for many years during and after the war in Brazil and became a Brazilian subject under another name which he had adopted in Persia. I have suggested to him that he should apply formally to the Government of India and the government of the Punjab stating all the facts.

I do not yet know my programme definitely after Genoa but it seems likely that I shall go straight to Spain—Barcelona—for a few days. With luck I might have a fairly exciting time there as bombing is a daily occurrence. I am due in London on June the 22nd or 23rd.

10. A revolutionary who went into exile in Persia in 1908 and remained abroad in Europe and South America till 1945; died 1947.

Miss B. Batlivala,<sup>11</sup> who is a fellow passenger, has kindly acted as my secretary during the voyage and has helped me greatly. She accompanied me to Cairo and Alexandria.

11. Now Mrs. Mansell.

## 11. On the Morale of Spain<sup>1</sup>

I was particularly struck by the civilian population's composure in the face of air raids and war conditions. They are carrying on almost normally under the most abnormal conditions by their conviction of ultimate victory. I am particularly impressed by the systematic methods employed here. I have received every courtesy and am very grateful for the facilities given to me.

1. Barcelona, 18 June 1938. *The Hindustan Times*, 19 June 1938.

## 12. On Spain and Britain<sup>1</sup>

I was astonished at the normality of Barcelona in spite of air raids and all manner of dangers. The trams were running, the shops open, the theatres and cinemas filled. I know that human beings could get used to almost anything, but I marvel how the people manage to carry on without much difference, not insouciant, but fully realising the seriousness of the situation and determined to face whatever happened.

I had a room on the sixth floor of a Barcelona hotel. Every night I heard an air-raid alarm and the sound of anti-aircraft guns, and from my seat on the balcony I watched a bombardment.

1. London, 19 June 1938. From *Manchester Guardian*, 24 June 1938.



I visited a large number of government offices and factories and met many high government officials, and I was much impressed with the general air of efficiency and the very orderly, businesslike way in which things were being done. It was the very reverse of any condition of panic, and this was largely due to the people's confidence in themselves. The government were always stressing the fact that it would be a long struggle, and preparing the people for another two years of conflict. All their work was based on that expectation. I was greatly impressed with the spirit and steadfast air of officers and men whom I met a few kilometres from the front.

I am convinced that even if these people are defeated in a material sense it would be astonishingly difficult to defeat them in a moral sense. I noticed that no one ever talked about civil war. They talked about resisting the invasion of Spain, and they resented the humiliation of that invasion. Any reverse for the republic hardened the people, but I think that psychologically Franco is weak, that if the struggle is prolonged his side might ultimately begin to crack up, and that he would only remain in Spain as long as the foreign troops are there.

Every Spaniard who spoke to me is bitter against the British Government, and especially against Mr. Chamberlain. They always referred to the French Government as being pushed by Great Britain. They said it is impossible to regard the British Government as neutral in this invasion; it is hostile to the Spanish Republic.

India is determined to oppose the federation as planned under the Government of India Act. The Congress demands that the constitution of India should be framed by a constituent assembly of the people of India. Recent events have intensified the determination of the Congress that India should be independent. When we talk about the independence of India it means breaking the political bonds that have existed between us, but not the relations, which may be of the closest, most friendly character. The question of what these relations should be can only be decided on equal terms. We want complete economic independence to develop our economic life and structure as we wish. During the last two or three years we have been thinking much more about international affairs. We cannot be tied down by any foreign policy of the British Government. We are so strongly opposed to that policy that we cannot tolerate being associated with it.

India is not going to be treated as a pawn in foreign affairs. It is not going to be associated with any war except by the express desire of the Indian people. They will not be dragged into any imperialist war, and they would oppose any attempt to make them parties to it.



### 13. France and India<sup>1</sup>

I am glad of the opportunity to say a few words to our friends in France, for France has long been for us a citadel of liberty, and in our own struggle for freedom in India we have often looked to France and her history for inspiration.

Europe today is full of crises and dangers and the threat of a terrible and devastating war hangs over all of us. People in Europe, busy with their own problems, are apt to forget India and the East; and yet India and the freedom of India are parts of the world problem, and till India is free from imperialist domination and has gained her independence, there will be no enduring peace in the world.

We in India stand for world peace and collective security and that is why we have gladly associated ourselves with the International Peace Campaign. But we are convinced that peace can come only when all people are freed from imperialist control.

Our struggle for independence is essentially in the interests of world peace. Even the methods we have adopted in this struggle have been peaceful ones, though none the less effective, as the growing power of our great national organisation, the Indian National Congress, shows. We have gained a measure of power in the provinces which our ministers control today, but real power still rests with British imperialism and we are determined to rid ourselves of this and gain full freedom.

We stand for a constituent assembly elected by the Indian people on an adult franchise to determine the future constitution of a free India. We claim and expect the goodwill of the French people, who have been for so long the torch-bearers of liberty in the world, in our struggle for freedom. India's freedom will be one of the bases of world peace and security for which we all strive.

1. Talk over the Paris radio, 20 June 1938. From *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 30 June 1938.

During the last few days I had been in Barcelona, and I witnessed the wonderful spirit of the Spanish people in the face of privation and great difficulties. I witnessed their calmness and even when the city was bombarded from the air and the civilian population was inhumanly massacred, the life of the city remained normal, perfect order prevailed and the people became more determined than ever to resist foreign invasion and win freedom. I am convinced that their spirit and indomitable will can never be crushed and Spain cannot be subjugated by foreign armies, however long their struggle may last.

It is a tragedy that in the name of non-intervention, democratic countries are putting difficulties in the way of the Spanish Republic and aiding its enemies. But the republic will triumph, and those who imagine otherwise and base their politics on this, will be grievously mistaken.

There is a talk of a withdrawal of foreign armies, which is difficult to materialise. But the real question is not of volunteers but of the munitions which are being poured in for the help of the insurgents and the foreign aircraft which is continually bombing open and defenceless cities. This at least must be stopped.

India has looked upon the struggle in Spain with the deepest interest, and all her sympathies are with the Spanish people and the republic. We consider this struggle as of vital importance in the world struggle for freedom. And we wish all success to the International Peace Campaign and its great work to preserve peace and establish it on an enduring basis in the world. In that work the Indian National Congress will give its fullest and whole-hearted cooperation.

The task of ensuring world peace based on freedom is the most vital today. Unless this is done, war of the most terrible and barbarous kind will envelop the world and destroy civilisation itself. We have to face great reactionary forces which dream in terms of war and imperialism and fascism. We cannot do this effectively or successfully unless the forces for peace and progress are also united and pulled together.

Hence the great importance of a world organisation working for peace like the International Peace Campaign which brings all these forces together and helps them to cooperate with each other and oppose the forces that lead to war. As a result of this realisation, the International Peace Campaign has also grown and represents today in all parts of the world the will to peace and freedom.

I am sure that the people of France, who have stood for peace and freedom, will help in every way this great campaign for peace and freedom and security.



## 14. The Situation in India<sup>1</sup>

Friends, you will forgive me for speaking in English. I am sorry for the incapacity of mine to express myself properly in French. I have come to Europe directly from India on a private visit. I cannot, however, get rid of my public capacity. Wherever I am, I am a bit of India, and my mind is naturally full of problems of India and her fight for independence. By way of importance, the first country I have visited is Spain in Europe. Though Spain has nothing to do with India directly, her fight for freedom is immensely significant. So also is China's fight and we have given help to them. You in Europe today, and for some time past, have been oppressed by the fear of an impending war. Your mind is full of a European complex. You may, not, therefore, give due importance to India and Asiatic problems. I, however, want you to show sympathy towards India in her struggle for independence, for she is not free. If your sympathy is based on the knowledge that her freedom will have an effect on the world problem, then you will treat the Indian question as your own. India is also a factor from the point of view of the independence of the subject peoples all over the world. Now you must realise that our fight for independence continues and it is bound to continue so long as independence is not reached. By independence we do not mean aggressive and imperialist nationalism, but, first of all, we mean to save the Indian masses from dire poverty by bringing about economic changes. So, we cannot accept any political status that will not allow us to make social changes. Secondly, our independence conflicts with British imperialism. We have been and are opposed to British imperialism but our fight is peaceful. We have built up a powerful organisation which represents all sections of the Indian people. It is called the Indian National Congress. Though we have not gained our independence, we have come nearer to it. We are in a strong position and are getting stronger. Our country is now in a position to influence the international situation and we can change British foreign policy. It is, therefore, natural that we think of independence. We, however, do not believe in exclusive nationalism. We believe in collective peace and cooperation. Of course, fascist imperialism should not hold its sway over any part of the world. In our

1. Speech at the Hall of Nations, Paris, 21 June 1938. From *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 30 June 1938.



opinion, peace can come only when India is free. The Indian and Chinese masses are more peace-loving than any other people in the world. So, more than any other nation, we want peace. Now, in India today, as you have just heard from M. Dolivet, we have various Congress ministries and they will have to go when the Congress so desires. At the same time, the British Government have retained enough powers. Only their control or check is not constitutional and is a matter of conflict between them and ourselves. In the present situation the British Government do not like that conflict, firstly, because of our strength and, secondly, because of the international conflict. Therefore, we can exercise a great deal of pressure on the British Government, and if there is a crisis in Europe, our position will make a difference. We declare that we shall not be a party to an imperialist war. Without our consent any war will be resisted by us.

Now it is possible that a grave crisis may overtake our country if the British Government try to impose federation on us which is utterly bad and prevents us from realising our aims. The British Government have not done it yet. Again, they are afraid of a crisis in India. What do we stand for? We want a constituent assembly to frame our constitution without any interference by the British Government. We want to be friendly with every nation, even with England, and to settle our affairs. Both for Spain and China, Indian national feelings have been very powerfully stirred. Our National Congress has passed resolutions on their behalf. In India, thousands of demonstrations and meetings have taken place in favour of the Chinese and the Spanish people. We have sent medical help to Spain and are organising to do the same for China. We have boycotted Japanese goods. The Japanese export to India, in spite of its cheapness, is falling considerably.

In Malaya, the Chinese workers in the iron mines went on strike and refused to work for the Japanese. So the Japanese proprietors employed Indians who have settled in Malaya in great numbers. The Chinese organisation telegraphed to the Indian National Congress, and the Congress pressed the Indian workers, with success, to do as the Chinese workers did. So not a single Indian worker was found.

Question: What steps did India take against the Anschluss?

Jawaharlal Nehru: There were many demonstrations but Indians could not take any effective steps. Our people do not have any effective means of helping Austria. In India, we have to oppose British imperialism. We do not have foreign affairs in our hands. We can only express our opinions. The British Government's policy in India supports and encourages fascist plots.

**Q:** Under what material situation of distress and starvation do the Indian people live and what is the exact figure of the yearly levy or drain of Indian wealth by British imperialism?

**JN:** The standard of life in India has progressively deteriorated, and the ruralisation of India, consequent on the destruction of Indian industries for the benefit of the British capital and industries, has aggravated the country's poverty. Large cities have become extinct, or have been converted into markets for foreign goods, and many people have lost their occupations. Consequently, they had to fall back on land. The burden on land is so acute that poverty has increased. Land cannot support everybody. During the last hundred years the Indian industry has disappeared and now most of the industries are owned by the British. In fact, poverty is increasing and is likely to increase unless changes take place.

It is difficult to give accurate statistics relating to the drain of India's wealth because there are visible and invisible drains. One million pound sterling is the national debt largely consisting of the purchase price given by the British Government to the East India Company, and we have to pay for British war conquests in India, Burma, China, Afghanistan, Persia and Africa. We have to pay for conquest over ourselves. We have not repudiated the British debt, but we want an impartial arbitration and we would abide by its verdict, but the British Government refuses to have arbitration. The British Government does not pay to America while she wants India to pay. Pensions, debt charges, currency manipulations, and the industrial drain are all included in the British levy on India.

The present Act contains a peculiar section. We cannot do anything to improve our economy or influence the financial, trade and industrial policies of the government, as doing so will hurt British interests. Consequently, we cannot have industrial development and national shipping. The British Government will not allow us to have them. In the same way, anything we do is opposed by them.

**Q:** What measures are the fascist countries adopting to profit by the actual Indian situation in their international policy?

**JN:** Many vain attempts have been made by the fascist powers to use the national discontent of the subject people. There has been a great deal of Italian propaganda in India by broadcasting from Rome in various Indian languages. Attempts have been made from Berlin to get various writings published in the Indian press. Some individuals are inevitably affected. All these methods, however, have proved a failure. The National Congress is opposed to fascism anywhere and everywhere. Our



national movement has been politically well developed. During the Abyssinian crisis, there was a tendency in Italy to create anti-British sentiment in India. We were defending Abyssinia against Italy. We were sorry that the fight for Abyssinian freedom did not go far enough. Our fight for political freedom is against all oppressors. So all attempts by the fascists to exploit Indian national feelings have failed in India.

Q: Can you tell us something about the British attempts to establish peasant cooperatives in India and about the peasants' relations with the Congress?

JN: Out of 3 million members of the Congress about eighty per cent are peasants. But there are many more peasants who could not become members for they have no means to pay the membership fee and so are not formal members. In some parts, big landed proprietors or zamindars exist, and in other parts, lots of small peasant proprietors are fast becoming paupers. Fragmentation of land into small plots has been a curse. The peasant proprietor's land is so small that he is always in debt to the money-lender. But much worse is the position of peasant tenants in other parts. They can be evicted by the landlords at any time, and rent can be increased, and thus they find themselves unable to pay taxes and revenue. The poverty of the peasant tenants has strengthened the national movement and they have looked towards the Congress. The British Government tried to do something for these poor people. But we must realize that no lasting good to the peasants can be done by the British Government because they rely on big landlords for support. So they cannot take adequate remedial steps as they are afraid of offending the zamindars. The big landlords, however, are doing nothing. They know that the British cannot do away with them. So only small attempts have been made to do some good to the peasants.

## 15. Conditions in India<sup>1</sup>

India has come to realize that Indian problems are a part of world affairs, and much that happens abroad has reactions in India.

1. Speech at a reception in the House of Commons, 23 June 1938. From *The Hindustan Times*, 24 June 1938.



The feeling in England two and a half years ago was that the Indian question had been settled. That feeling was based on an erroneous conception because the Indian question today is bigger than it had been at any time in the past. There are at the moment enormous potentialities for good or evil.

India is passing through a period in which the forces of conflict are not obvious—there is no civil disobedience—but beneath the surface there is great tension and a feeling that great changes must come. India is not opposed to federation on principle, but only to the type of federation envisaged in the Government of India Act.

## 16. Britain, Spain and India<sup>1</sup>

After seeing British policy at work in Spain and elsewhere, India is more than ever determined to free herself from British domination. This is especially true with regard to her international policy. This is perhaps the chief message I bring back from my visit to Spain. Possibly, two things impressed me more than any other, the first was the normal life in Barcelona and the other was the indomitability and great reserve power of the Spanish people. Of course, it is always hard for a layman to make an expert judgment, but unless the Spanish Government is literally starved to death in food and munitions, I do not see how the Republican Spain can lose. The army is confident and strong. Everyone else is also confident of the ultimate victory.

There is no doubt that the mass of the Spanish people believe that the British Government is hostile to them. I encountered this sentiment frequently and I believe, particularly responsible for it are the surprising misjudgements which Mr. Chamberlain, the British Premier, made about Spain.

For instance, what happened about the Anglo-Italian agreement?<sup>2</sup> Approximately three months ago, Mr. Chamberlain began to believe that General Franco would win within a couple of weeks and he rushed to Italy so as to be on the victorious side. Then what happened? He was completely fooled and his judgment was found wrong. But did

1. Interview to the press, London, 23 June 1938. From *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 24 June 1938.

2. See *Selected Works*, Vol. 8, p. 739.

he revise his opinion so as to fit it in with facts? Apparently not. The British Government still maintains the view that Spain will fall any day, though we all know it is not true.

Here is a good example. One of the most important British correspondents in Barcelona told me that his home office refused to believe and publish his stories, merely because if they did publish the information from their correspondent, the British Government's myth about the imminent collapse of the Spanish Government would be exploded.

Spain is a long way off from India, but there are some interesting points in common. For instance, the bombings which I experienced in Barcelona. In scope, these cannot fairly compare with the so-called police bombings by the British Government on the north west frontier.<sup>3</sup> But in principle it amounts to the same thing and in point of fact the British bombings have the same effect as the Italian bombings in Spain. The only victims are women and children. They arouse nothing but rage and a desire for revenge. They are not definitely a military success. That may have something to do with the new readiness of the British Government to give them up because they insisted at the last Disarmament Conference<sup>4</sup> that they would retain bombers for these police raids. The British people have heavy responsibilities for what is happening in Barcelona today to innocent women and children and to the seamen of their own ships.

One of the greatest lessons Spain can teach the world is the power of unity, and the same lesson is to be studied also in China. The unity of all progressive democratic forces in the country multiplies its strength many times. We know this in India from experience. The Spanish victory over Germans and Italians, who are constantly spreading subtle pro-fascist propaganda in India as well, would be a great encouragement to India. Any triumph over fascism, wherever in the world, helps India as it helps everyone.

**Question:** Do Mahatma Gandhi and the Congress favour Republican Spain?

**Jawaharlal Nehru:** Mahatma Gandhi and the entire Congress are definitely in favour of Republican Spain.

3. See *Selected Works*, Vol. 8, pp. 457-462.

4. At the World Disarmament Conference in 1932, no agreement could be reached as no country was prepared to consider the question from the wider international aspect. In regard to aerial bombing, every country approved of its complete abolition but Britain added a proviso permitting bombing for police purposes in outlying areas.



## 17. The Need for Understanding India<sup>1</sup>

In India I am accustomed to address the unsophisticated millions who require from no speaker the arts of an orator, and if I speak in that simple manner, it is not because I am unappreciative of an English audience, but because I am apt to forget myself.

I am deeply moved by the welcome. It indicates that the gathering associates itself with India's struggle for freedom, which is related to larger questions in the world. You have a good deal of responsibility to share in regard to what has happened in India in the last few generations. Many things happened which it is not easy to forget, but we will forget them keeping in view the larger interests of the two peoples and in the interests of the bond which unites all the progressive-minded people who are engaged in a common struggle against imperialism and fascism.

In India we are gradually beginning to associate ourselves with the wider world movement for real freedom and are looking forward to it enthusiastically. Nationalism in itself is not a good thing, but fortunately India, in spite of the terrible background of history, has kept its movements and its nationalism remarkably free from racial bitterness and strife.

We appreciate the gestures made to us by the people in England and elsewhere, but gestures do not help people in becoming free. I want the problem of India to be studied in its proper context. I am pained to see how the British labour movement views freedom in a somewhat limited sense, and I am more pained by the approach of the party to certain peculiar issues. It is quite right that there should have been protests against the bombing of Barcelona and in China. I have seen the horrors in Barcelona, but why had there not been protests long ago against bombing on the north west frontier? I admit that there is a difference in degree, but none in principle between bombing Barcelona and bombing the Indian frontier. It is quite impossible for the British Government to condemn the one and permit the other.

1. Reply to the welcome address at Caxton Hall, London, 27 June 1938. From *The Hindu*, 3 July 1938.

Indignation is felt here at the bombing of Barcelona and Canton. I want you to realise that there is no difference in principle between the bombing of Barcelona and Canton and of the north west frontier. If England is responsible for bombing the north west frontier, it is impossible for her to condemn the bombings of any other place.

The Indian problem is primarily, essentially and fundamentally the problem of the peasants of India, and of their incredible poverty, and if you wish to solve this problem you must think in terms of relieving the poverty and raising the mass of peasants and workers to a human level. I want you to consider the problem from this angle and not from a lawyer's point of view. You cannot solve the problem within the fabric of imperialism. History shows that a dominating power, unable to solve the fundamental problem of the people it governs, cannot last long. Therefore, we think that British imperialism must go from India. The Indian National Congress has great leaders, but what gives it strength is the peasantry of India, the hunger of India, and so long as that hunger is not satisfied, this struggle will go on. If you develop a habit of looking away from a problem, the problem does not cease to exist, though it is possible that you may cease to exist.

One thing which distresses me very much is that all over the world there is degradation of spirit, which ultimately is projected in its grossest form by fascism. Fascism is a near kin to imperialism; unless by your words and actions you also condemn imperialism, it is not much use condemning fascism. You have been surprised in the past few years at the extent of the excesses to which human beings can go, but the atmosphere in which such excesses take place is fairly familiar to us. Go down to the roots of fascism and imperialism and you will find they lead to the same place. There have been similar excesses in India. When these took place in other places you were shocked, and rightly so, but you ought to have been shocked earlier when they were taking place in India.

I do not want you to think of India as cut off from the rest of the world but to treat it as part of a human and international problem. The peasants and their poverty constitute the real problem. It is not a question of federation or of constitutional niceties; nor is it a problem for a lawyer or a politician. It is a great human problem and unless it is solved, it must inevitably provoke revolution. Because British imperialism is incapable of solving it, it must go from India. It is not a legal but a vital matter touching the economic life of millions of people, and the Congress sees it as such. We in India are going to solve our problems. I have however been disappointed to find a spirit of pessimism and degeneration overtaking the people in Europe. Such a



spirit allows many terrible things to flourish under the grossest and crudest form of fascism. But India looks at her future with confidence, and I personally have a vision of triumph before my eyes. Sometimes I think the democratic movement in England might be helped by what we do in India.

The Congress is going to have nothing to do with the foreign policies of the British Government and would not accept the consequences of those policies, nor take any part in an imperialist war. I beg all my friends in England to get down to the roots of India's problem which is a world problem. Once they realise this all would be well.

## 18. India and the International Situation<sup>1</sup>

The international situation today is critical and it becomes more and more evident that the attitude India takes is of great importance.

India's attitude is as important internationally as nationally. British foreign policy is entirely reactionary and is aiding fascist aggression. As such, it is bringing war nearer, whatever its professions may be. I feel India must reiterate firmly what it has already declared that it will oppose an imperialist war.

As to the Indian situation, it is my firm conviction today that India should have a constituent assembly and no half-way house would be acceptable to her people.

India can and, I hope, will play an important part in international affairs. India's attitude towards the Spanish struggle is deeply appreciated by the Spanish people, and their struggle, heroically conducted against tremendous odds, must be an inspiration to all who love freedom.

1. Interview to the correspondent of *The Hindustan Times*, London, 29 June 1938. *The Hindustan Times*, 1 July 1938.

## 19. The Boycott of Japanese Goods<sup>1</sup>

If Lord Zetland and Lord Halifax want to know the Congress views about the federation and India's reaction to international developments, I am prepared to express them forcibly.

There is no truth in the reports that Sir Walter Citrine and I are preparing a Japanese goods boycott plan. I have discussed the question of the boycott of Japanese goods at Transport House. Our own efforts in India in this regard have been fairly successful. Sir Walter Citrine and others were very much interested in it. We are always prepared to cooperate with others in a boycott, but there is no question of the preparation of any plan.

I am seeing the Archbishop of Canterbury<sup>2</sup> on Monday.

1. Interview to the press, London, 29 June 1938. From *The Hindustan Times*, 30 June 1938.
2. Cosmo Gordon Lang (1864-1945); Archbishop of Canterbury, 1928-42; member, Joint Committee on Indian Constitutional Reforms, 1933; a staunch supporter of Chamberlain's policy of appeasement.

## 20. India and the World<sup>1</sup>

One remarkable thing about India is that we have developed a very great interest in international affairs not only in relation to India, but because the Indian problem has become and is becoming more and more an essential part of the world problem.

An anti-imperialist people like the Indians cannot help being anti-fascist, support the Spanish Republic in its struggle against the interventionist, fascist and imperialist powers, and favour the Chinese people in their struggle for independence against the military fascist imperialism of Japan.

1. Interview to the *Daily Worker*, London, printed on 29 June 1938. Reproduced in *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 6 July 1938.



As such, the Indian people are opposed to the foreign policy of the British National Government and cannot tolerate to be associated with it.

That feeling was expressed when, in February, the Congress passed a historic resolution<sup>2</sup> in favour of a free India taking its part in the collective organisation of peace.

The fundamental starting-point for an understanding of the problem is, however, the fact that the Indian people are determined to win their economic and political independence from Britain, and they will make use of any crisis in which Britain is involved, to further their liberation struggle.

Thus, supposing Britain were drawn into a war against Germany and Italy following an attack on Czechoslovakia, there can be little doubt that the British would try to use this situation to fasten themselves even tighter on India.

Now, for two reasons, the Indian people would resist such an attempt. In the first place, as our aim is independence the Indian people will not participate in a war that is not of their own choosing. Now, it would be impossible for the people of India to make that free choice while still subject to British rule. Our first task would, therefore, be to free ourselves.

In the second place, and this has been clearly shown by the experiences both in Spain and China, that fascism can be successfully defeated in war only if the popular anti-fascist forces are really in control of the leadership.

Thus, in a way, we in India would be facing a problem very similar to that which the really anti-fascist forces in Britain itself would be facing—the problem of security—if the war was being conducted in a really anti-fascist, democratic and thus an anti-imperialist manner. And our struggle for freedom would assist in solving this problem.

The Indian people are fundamentally anti-imperialist and, in any case, there would certainly be at least a tendency towards noncooperation.

Recently, of course, the whole internal situation in India has changed considerably. It would, for instance, be the easiest thing in the world to stop the peasant paying taxes. And if the Indian National Congress were to give a call for the non-payment of taxes, that would, of course, mean major conflicts.

Furthermore, the present Indian army is recruited mainly from the peasantry. The Indian soldiers, when on leave, go back to their villages, maintain contact with the people of their own class and origin. There-

2. See *Selected Works*, Vol. 8, p. 740.

fore, it would be impossible for the British—in the event of a major peasant movement—to prevent the army from being affected.

Today, the army is pretty efficient. But just because of the fact that it is mainly based on the peasantry, it cannot be considered, from the British point of view, as a 'reliable' army.

So there arises the question of whether or not, sooner or later—and sooner than later—the Indian people will have to develop their own army, a popular army, a democratic army, somewhat similar to the National Revolutionary Army in China and the People's Army in Spain.

I am convinced that somehow or other such an army would have to be developed. There are, of course, very great difficulties—the difficulties experienced by every popular army at its formation—the problem of officers, the problem of command.

But there is no doubt that responsible Indian circles are well aware of the problem. Already it has ceased to be an entirely theoretical one. The various Congress ministries are actually discussing ways and means by which some sort of training—not of course at the moment—anything like a real military training can be given to the population.

Any such move would naturally be viewed with the greatest possible disfavour by the British. Thus the whole question of the Congress power, not only in the provinces but also at the centre, is raised.

If, at the time of crisis, the Congress ministries in the provinces were to refuse to cooperate with the central government, they would obviously be dismissed. Then the British would have two alternatives—either to call new elections, which would only result in a greatly strengthened Congress majority, or to rule by decree, which would provoke a major conflict.

What becomes more than ever essential is therefore some real power at the centre. This, in essence, is the other side of the struggle against federation as proposed by the Government of India Act.

The English people should give up the idea that they can muddle through the Indian problem and imagine that thereby the Indian problem is disposed of.

Any attempt to impose federation will provoke a major conflict. Any attempt to evade the issues will provoke conflict. There is only one solution to the problem—the ending of the British supremacy in India.

And the anti-fascist British people should realise that it is not possible to conduct the anti-fascist struggle successfully, if the anti-imperialist struggle is ignored. It is no more impossible to do this than it is to condemn the fascist bombing of open towns in Spain and China while tolerating British bombing on the north west frontier of India.



## 21. The Hidden Crisis in India<sup>1</sup>

I have come to England after about two years and a half. During this period there have been marked changes in India. The formation of the Congress ministries is but a petty and superficial aspect of the change in India. Other matters occupy my mind more than this. But I also observe that our problems have come nearer a crisis. Some of you think that India, of late, is quiet and passive. But this apparent quietness is a mere facade which hides the real problems of political and social freedom. I have become aware of a new strength among the Indian peasantry and the working class. The peasantry in some places has become even aggressive. I welcome this visible sign for it embodies a new spirit. I welcome it for it is a symbol of the coming strength. India is now beginning to face the world with confidence. Power politics is not an agreeable matter, at any rate, in Europe. But India is now a powerful factor, let no one forget that.

There is a talk about the Government of India Act and the federation. The Congress has made it quite clear that federation cannot be imposed on her by a third party. To me office acceptance and federation mean little by themselves. I can think of them only in terms of independence. India has one demand—positive, immediate and, I believe, moderate also—the formation of a constituent assembly which alone can prepare a democratic constitution for India. I can visualise cooperation with England in innumerable fields, with mutual advantage, provided England begins with a clean slate. I think it possible, almost probable, for England to begin with a clean slate, without having any reservations or restrictions.

To my mind, India cannot submit to an imposed constitution. It alone shall decide what it wants. This attitude is crystal clear. After all, frankness is the friendliest gesture. And in all frankness I say that India will have nothing less than complete independence and perfect equality.

1. Talk to Indian residents, London, 30 June 1938. From *The Hindustan Times*, 8 July 1938.

## 22. India and Britain<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Chairman and Comrades,

For some years past I have heard of the Left Book Club, mostly only heard of it, because perhaps many of you are not aware that, wide as is the scope of the Left Book Club, it does not include India in its dominion. Not that, that affects so much the income of the Left Book Club, because at least so far as I am concerned, I used to get regularly from my book-seller, bills for books supplied which never came to me. They were stopped by the censorship, or by that extraordinary provision of the law in India, the Sea Customs Act, which empowers customs officers to stop any books they do not like. And apparently Mr. Gollancz's name is not liked by the customs officials in India.

It, therefore, gives me a peculiar satisfaction to come here and speak to you under the auspices of the Left Book Club. I have heard with admiration of the growth of this Left Book Club movement, because it is a movement and something much more than mere printing and publishing of books—and how it is spreading all over, not only in England but in other countries also—of certain types of books, serious books, which more and more people read. After all, in considering the problems of today, the more thought we give to them, the more we study them, the more will we be in a position to solve them.

I am somewhat embarrassed by the remarks of our chairman today.<sup>2</sup> Like him I am a modest person. But perhaps you might be led to expect from what he has said that perhaps I might say something in the heroic vein. I am incapable of feeling heroic or of speaking heroically. Also, after the last 10 or 12 days in London, during which period

1. Speech at the Left Book Club rally, Queen's Hall, London, 6 July 1938. From *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 13 July 1938.

2. Victor Gollancz, founder of the Left Book Club, said in his introductory remarks: "There have been heroes in the world of many kinds—teachers, philosophers and masterminds. But, in the present historical epoch there is but one true class of hero—the hero of humanity. And in that class Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru is conspicuous. Only twice in my life have I felt great humility in the presence of another man—once when I saw Dimitroff almost alone facing the rising Nazism, and the second time when I met Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru."



I have addressed a large number of big and small audiences, I do not feel exactly fresh, and it is hardly a suitable preparation for addressing this large audience. Still, as you have done me the honour of coming here, I shall endeavour to place before you the problem of India as I see it.

What exactly is this problem of India about? You have a large number of problems to face: domestic problems, international problems, European problems, the problems of China, Spain, etc. You are full of them. You have gathered here today to hear about India, and I take it that many of you do not usually have the opportunity either to hear about India or to read about it, because the newspapers here are generally silent about India. In fact, India is seldom mentioned. The fact that there is an Indian problem may have escaped many readers of the newspapers here. But because this is so, it does not do away with the problem. The problem becomes rather bigger.

Now India is obviously a problem in itself, but the way you would like to consider it, and the way I would like to consider it, is more in relation to the other problems of the world, to the international situation. Personally, I have always tried to look upon it in that way, and I think that it is not really possible to understand any one of these problems that face us, unless we have before us that larger picture of the world as it is today. Of course, if I function in India, as I must, I function largely on an Indian plane, and I have to face the various difficulties peculiar to India that are always there. But even those difficulties I can better appreciate and thus function much more effectively in India if I keep the larger picture of the world before me and try to fit India into it somewhere. Therefore, it is desirable that we should look upon these problems in that way. And if we really feel that the Indian problem is a part of the world problem then we cannot ignore it, because if we do, we will be doing something which will come in the way of our understanding of the larger problem.

It is surprising how people sometimes discuss things and do things as if they were not related in any way to a larger whole and come to strange conclusions. The world is a very strange place to live in, but stranger still is the fact that even intelligent people can take these little problems separately, and discuss them without relation to the larger whole. I think we in India will not go far in the solution of our problems unless we see them in relation to the larger whole, and I do not think you will go far unless you know something about India and can fit it into the larger picture. Therefore, let us consider this question of India from that point of view.

It is quite extraordinary how in the course of the last twenty years, since the war, repeated attempts have been made—over one hundred

international conferences have been held in various parts of the world, in Europe and America — to consider and solve the various political and economic problems. Leading statesmen, prime ministers and foreign ministers have gathered together, and after weeks of discussion have gone back home without solving any problem. Before every conference, they had threatened us that if the conference did not succeed, the world would be faced with disaster. I suppose that most of the people who went to these conferences desired some kind of a solution, both for personal reasons, because of their reputation as statesmen, and for wider reasons. And despite that, they utterly failed to do it. And as we see it, there has been a continuous deterioration in the situation, and we have now arrived at this mess. What a strange thing it is that these statesmen continue to function in the same old way and do not try to find out what the roots of the problems are! I do not suppose you can say they are not intelligent, but there must be something lacking because they do not desire to look at the roots of the problems. They avoid them. Because they have been functioning on a different plane, they think, to touch the roots will change the whole structure, affect interests which they do not want to be affected, and the result is that they function superficially and ineffectively, and their efforts are a failure.

In India, the immediate problem before us, call it a national problem if you like, is the problem of gaining our national freedom. That is to say, it is an anti-imperialist problem, the problem of ridding India of the dominion of the British Empire. Now, a very large number of people in England today do not like fascism. They attack it and condemn it. And yet many of them who do so get very irritated if you talk about the British Empire functioning in India or other colonial parts of the empire. They try to separate these two things. Of course one can find the points of distinction. But because they try to think that the imperialist system is something different, and because they seek to preserve it in a way while attacking fascism, their attack loses all real effectiveness. There is no logic behind it. You know how in the past the fascist leaders of Italy have repeatedly taunted the British people and said, "We are only doing what you have done in the past." And it is a common taunt in Europe, when the question of bombing comes up in connection with China or Spain, that the British people are continuously doing it on the north west frontier of India.

So in considering these questions you have to be logical in order to understand the roots of them and not try to preserve your interests and to condemn somebody else's, although yours may be of the same kind. Obviously, I am no lover of the British Empire, but the astounding fact is that the British Government today is conducting a foreign policy



which, as it seems to me, would inevitably bring about a fall of this empire. We now seem to be actual witnesses to the fading of the British Empire. It may take a little time, and perhaps the reason for it is this. When a thing has had its day, whether it is an empire, or a group, or a class, it begins to function most foolishly, and virtually ends up by committing what may be called *hara-kiri*. And that is what we are seeing today. And while I have no objection to the British Empire committing *hara-kiri*, it is interesting to see how this kind of a thing occurs. Looking at it even from the point of view of an imperialist group of statesmen, it astounds me why they function the way they are functioning at the present time.

The fact is that as this whole imperialist system has tied itself up in such enormous knots, it is meeting its own nemesis; and it is not likely to get out of it, unless the people who run it themselves realise that they cannot continue it. But, unhappily, such people seldom have that vision or courage, and so conflicts come, and the end is the same, except that it is an end brought about after much conflict, bitterness and suffering. It is unfortunate, but usually that is what has taken place in history.

I do not know whether those progressive-minded people in various parts of the world will be able in future to exert such an influence so as to bring about this change without any major conflict. No doubt, it is a curious state of affairs—we see all these contradictions everywhere, both within nations, and certainly in the international sphere. And it seems to me that we are not going to get rid of any of these problems ultimately unless there is an effective world solution of them. That, of course, does not mean that those of us who function in India should wait patiently for a world solution. We have to carry on and seek solution in our own particular area or country we live in, but at the same time we must envisage that solution as part of the world solution, otherwise we would be functioning less effectively than we might.

Therefore, we again come back to this: that we must see the problems in relation to the whole, and while we push our own struggle, it must not run counter to the larger world struggle. If it does, it cannot get the benefit of the great world process which is so clearly in operation today. We are in a tremendous revolutionary period—a period of transition which will lead us somewhere. Where exactly, we are not able to say, but we can say that an enormous change will take place in the not distant future.

In India there is a nationalist movement. There is also a social movement. The two react on each other, and although the freedom movement in India was, for long years, essentially a nationalist movement—as it was bound to be because the first reaction to foreign domination

is to create nationalism and a desire for political freedom—but as that movement grew and as it got into touch with the masses, and the masses came into it, the masses began to influence it. As the influence of the masses went on increasing, and as the mass influence is always in the direction of social change, this movement in India was inevitably forced by circumstances to think about social change. And even behind that nationalist movement, what was ultimately the urge? Why did this vast number of peasants side with the Indian National Congress? Surely, because they saw in the Congress an organisation which promised relief to them. When we talk about Swaraj, which means independence, they take the word to mean in their own sense, that is something which would rid them of their burdens, because if Swaraj comes and it does not rid them of their burdens, it would be a poor relief and certainly not worthwhile. So they came. Therefore behind this political movement, which, to begin with, did not consciously express the real urge behind it, was ultimately led to give expression to the urge to remove the poverty and misery of India. After all, the fundamental problem is the problem of poverty.

It is an astounding problem, and you who know something of the distress caused by unemployment in England, can have some conception of what Indian poverty is. It is something really shocking. It is true that those of us who live there get used to it. We are not shocked as we might be, as human beings have an infinite capacity to get used to anything. The mere fact that human beings put up with the sorry state of this world is surprising enough. It was astounding to see human beings in Barcelona carrying on in spite of daily air raids. So we see one gets used to it—but still the state of the Indian people is alarming.

We sometimes talk of this long period of British rule over India. It has really been a long period, and sometimes when you talk to an audience, which perhaps is very different from this Left Book Club audience, the people in the audience say, can you find any good having resulted from such a long period of British rule over India? Of course, I could make a list of good things that have been done—railways, post offices, telegraphs, canals and the like. But the real thing is that the extreme poverty and misery of the country do not speak well for the 160 years of British rule, and all the railways and telegraph services do not do away with that major fact. And indeed if you analyse this problem you will see—and I do not mean to say that there was no poverty in India before the British came—that a great change has taken place in the world since the days when the British came to India. It was during the first days of the industrial revolution that the British came to India and since then industrialisation has taken place in the world. In the early days



there were famines in certain places in India caused by the failure of the rains. There was then no means of getting food in one particular area from elsewhere, but during the later British period there were still food famines in India, and they were worse — they were famines of money, because food could be brought by train, but people did not have the wherewithal to buy it. So you must not compare the poverty of the former days caused more by lack of proper methods of production, bad transport, etc., to the poverty caused by famines in the present times when new conditions of life have helped the countries of the West including America to become more prosperous. Though some of the changes which have helped those countries in becoming prosperous have been introduced in our country also, yet our poverty has gone on increasing. It is obviously due to the political and economic systems operating in the country which have drained her wealth out of the country. In Britain, as you became industrialised, great cities grew up, and the villages became deserted. Whether that was good or bad, I am not going to talk about it. However, the fact is that almost all over the more or less civilised parts of the world, you saw a progressive urbanisation which meant the development of industry. In contrast, during the last hundred years or so there has been a progressive ruralisation in our country. Now, do not get confused by the fact that you see cities like Bombay and Calcutta growing up. They are great centres of what? Fundamentally, they are centres or emporia of foreign goods which come to be distributed all over India. And in these cities, built up at the expense of the smaller towns and even villages, we have seen a great exodus from towns to villages. Why? Because they had no occupation or business in the towns, no openings, because their old occupations had gone, and the millions of people who followed these occupations, handicrafts and the like, could not pursue them. Originally, they were stopped by various legal enactments which the East India Company enforced. Latterly, by the direction of economic forces they could not compete with the products of the factories from the West.

But, ordinarily, this would have resulted in the building up of industrialism in India, because, remember, India was a country highly developed so far as manufacturing was concerned when the British came. Indeed, when the British and before them others came they came in search of Indian manufactures to sell to the West. So that it was at a stage when the next step might have been the development of industry. That was stopped deliberately, and, at the same time, the old manufactures and small industries were crushed. Consequently, scores of millions of people had nothing to do, and this process went on for over one hundred years.

To begin with, it was a big process. It came with a sudden bang, and affected millions, causing serious famines. For instance, one-third of the population of Bengal had perished in the early days of British rule.<sup>3</sup> Yet, strangely enough, the British revenue officials proudly declared: "We have collected the full revenues here". This process continued right through the hundred years—as railways developed and as foreign manufactured goods went into the country. Wherever they went the petty industries could not compete with them, and as the people had no occupation left to them, they left the towns and went to the villages, thinking in terms of getting work on the land.

They became a burden on the land because where a tract of land provided work for half a dozen persons, there were now twenty or thirty which the land could not support. So the level of the people went down and down. That is the fundamental problem of Indian poverty and how it has grown in the last hundred years. The British rule has adopted a policy of preventing industrialisation of the country. The machinery coming into India is heavily taxed. It is a far more costly venture to build a factory in India than in England, although labour is so much cheaper in India.

It was only, more or less, during the last war that, of course, in spite of them, industrialisation gradually grew among certain classes in Bombay and other centres on a very small scale. During the war there was a new phase because then British goods and other goods could not come in easily, and for war purposes the British Government had to encourage industries to grow in India. And after the war the situation arose when, first of all, Indian nationalism was growing strong, and secondly Indian industry was also not so weak, and the British Government did not want Indian industry to ally itself with the more revolutionary elements in Indian nationalism and so wanted to give them some kind of bribe.

But more important still, ever since the war, they thought in terms of future wars, and they felt that from the point of view of future wars, it was necessary for them to develop some kind of industry in India. It may be of a peculiar kind—for their own purposes—but still they allowed it to develop to some extent. So some of the old restrictions were removed. But, peculiarly, the Indian industry developed with British capital and under British control, and the profits were largely going outside India. This is a curious situation. We talk of *swadeshi*, which means home-made goods, but relatively few Indian industries profit because all the bigger concerns have grown up with British capital. Big concerns are going out there adding 'India' after their names as, for

3. In the famine of 1770, one-third of the population of Bengal and Bihar died.



instance, Imperial Chemical Industries India Ltd., and they take enormous areas on lease, and the curious thing is that the government has refused to publish the terms of the lease given to the Imperial Chemical Industries. In this way, great British combines are digging themselves in since the war. And while you have been talking so much of constitutional changes and discussing them at length in Parliament and elsewhere, all the time these combines have been digging themselves in and creating enormous vested interests, creating fresh vested interests and making it extraordinarily difficult for us to get a move on when we have the chance, unless we dig them out completely.

So behind this political problem you see the complexities of this economic problem and how it is intimately related to the poverty of India. You will discuss the Indian question vaguely and ask, "Why do you object to Dominion Status—why talk in terms of independence?" Well, I do so realising that independence might be a mere word as we have seen in the case of Egypt and other places, but about one thing we are clear that we are going to rid India of this tremendous imperialist, economic and financial control. And we do not therefore want to think in terms of a political constitution giving us what might be considered political freedom with no real economic freedom. We feel we can solve the problem of Indian poverty only by making great inroads in the economic system, and we cannot do this unless we are free from the control of the City of London and their financial interests. Therefore, we must think in terms of independence.

Of course, we think in terms of independence for other reasons too. I shall go into that now. For the present moment, I will refer to foreign policy. India will not submit to British foreign policy. I can very well understand and should personally welcome cooperation between India and Britain, but, first of all, any cooperation must inevitably be the cooperation between two free nations. Secondly, it must be cooperation for the common aim of elimination of imperialism.

We have tried in India during these past years to develop and strengthen our movement, and our strength has definitely increased. It is great enough for the British Government to think seriously before inviting a conflict. On two or three occasions, in the past few months, there was the possibility of a conflict because of a difference of opinion between the British Government, or the Governor who represents it, and the Congress ministries. But the British Government had to give in on all those issues.<sup>4</sup> This shows that the strength of our movement

4. See *Selected Works*, Vol. 8, pp. 640 and 759.

is such that the British Government is not easily prepared to invite conflict.

I do not mean that no conflict will ever take place. Occasions may arise when there is a conflict, when they do not give way and when we may also not give way. But still the movement is developing and becoming very strong, and largely so, because it has become more and more associated with the social problem. Therefore, this is also a fundamental problem for us to see how we can integrate the political struggle with the social struggle. Sometimes, of course, there is a slight conflict between the two in the sense that the political struggle being, in the main, the national struggle, comprises all manner of people of differing views. In regard to political matters, it draws several classes of people who may be in conflict with each other, but function together against the common foe, imperialism. But as soon as we begin to consider social problems, these classes get into conflict with each other, so that there is that inevitable conflict. At the same time, everybody in India realises now that before any solution of the social problem is found, there must be the power in our hands to solve it and that means political independence. Therefore, inevitably, the political question takes precedence, and even those who are keenest about social change insist on the political change coming first.

Still, difficulties arise because even the approach to the political question can be of various kinds. What kind of political freedom are we going to get? We may become free from British imperialism, but then, who is going to have the power in India afterwards? What will be the method of fighting to achieve freedom? The approach to it will be governed by the kind of freedom we have in our minds. At present, I will talk only in terms of political freedom. It should be at least a kind of freedom which itself becomes a bulwark against reaction.

Therefore the question becomes one of joining these two movements for social and political freedom and making them function together. That is to say, the whole urge for social freedom must throw its weight into the struggle for political freedom and influence it in its direction. I cannot say exactly how this will turn out, but on the whole in India the tendency has been very marked towards the political struggle assuming a social aspect and, generally speaking, the Congress today is definitely committed to social change on a fairly radical scale. I do not mean to say that the Congress as a whole has turned socialist. There are socialist wings, and there are right wings which disapprove of socialism and there is a large central bloc which vaguely approves of socialism, which is radical and which, generally speaking, will probably vote for a socialistic proposal, but which is not consciously and definitely



socialist, because this nationalist urge has been so great that it is moved by that more than by any other urge.

In fact, the reality is that so many of the peasants have come into this nationalist movement, that we cannot now function at all without giving consideration to peasant problems. And so, as soon as the Congress ministries came into existence, the first thing they had to do was to take up the agrarian problem. They cannot change fundamentally the land system any more than the present law allowed them to do; and as they had to do something at the present juncture, they have taken up for consideration big measures of land reform. What will happen to them I do not know. They will be passed by the legislative assemblies. But then we have been presented in the Government of India Act with second chambers in the provinces which are elected by strict franchise and where the majority of the members are big landlords. Its result has been that there are likely to be big conflicts between the second chambers representing the interests of the landlord and the other house representing the peasant interests. I do not quite know how this conflict will shape itself though it does not worry me very much because we are not concerned so much with a constitutional difficulty, as, in the ultimate analysis, what matters is the building up of the adequate power of the Indian people to be able to exercise sufficient pressure on the British Government to liquidate British imperialism in India.

Now, take for instance the provisions made in the Government of India Act, regarding the federation and provincial autonomy. I have vainly tried to find an answer as to how far, within its limited scope, has the Act enabled the successful working of these schemes. Though I would like to consider the question in its wider aspects, to me the whole conception of any constitution being drawn up and imposed on the Indian people is an absurd conception from the point of view of solving the Indian problem. It will not solve it. And the only possibility of solving it is to recognise that the people of India must take the matter into their own hands and must frame their own constitution. After that, the question may arise as to what the relations between India and England are going to be, and if this is discussed in the proper spirit, then the psychological background is created. If not, then a big conflict becomes inevitable and it creates yet another kind of psychological background which prevents the people on both sides from approaching each other in a friendly manner.

The Congress is a powerful organisation but it is democratic also. It might as well have drawn up a constitution. But it has adopted the other course by saying that a constituent assembly elected by adult

franchise should draw up this constitution. That is surely the only democratic method to do it. And I cannot conceive of any person who believes in democracy opposing this method. Any other method will be disapproved of. It will irritate. Take the case of provincial autonomy. We do not like it. Under it we cannot do much. Still, we are working it because we thought that we might be able to strengthen ourselves for the next conflict. That was the sole reason why we decided to work it. And I think the events during the last one year have strengthened us enormously. We have been able to do some good work, passing such legislation as has done some good. But the important point is how we can strengthen ourselves for the future. We have succeeded in doing that to a large extent.

We can therefore look upon the future with a considerable measure of confidence. The world today is full of crises. There is a possibility of war and many people feel rather distressed about it. We also feel distressed about it, but because of the new strength which we have developed in ourselves, we are singularly optimistic about the future of India, and we are thinking more and more in terms of taking part not only in freeing India—that, we feel, will come before very long—but also of playing some role in international affairs.

Already, I think, most far-seeing statesmen feel that Indian independence is not far distant, and their attitude towards India is rapidly undergoing a change because they want to make friends with a free India. Moreover, they are also aware of India's enormous potentialities, and about her playing an important part in the world. India is therefore already thinking in those terms and preparing herself for that time.

Now I want to put before you one fact which is an interesting one and which makes us think furiously. If advantage is not taken of a particular situation, we get into tremendous difficulties. You know of the tragedy in Spain. You remember in the early days of this revolt, Moroccan troops were brought over to Spain by Franco. An extraordinary thing, that Franco, representing a peculiar type of fascism and militarism, should take advantage of Moroccan people to suppress the republic of Spain. But why did that happen? Why was it allowed to happen? The republic of Spain, if it functioned properly, should have taken earliest steps to deal with its colonial problem. For various reasons it did not do so and has suffered for it. Its enemies took advantage of this. Nobody can believe that General Franco believes in the freedom of the various nationalities in the colonies, although I understand that he has declared that he is going not only to grant autonomy to Spanish Morocco but will also help them to build up some kind of Moroccan empire. Of course, such promises are cheaply made, but the point is how a false step



on the part of the republican government of Spain affected their own future so tremendously.

I do not know whether it is an absolute fact, but it very well might be that the Spanish Government did intend doing something and made some proposals for reducing the burden on their colonial population and relieving their agricultural distress. But the people in authority in French Morocco thought that if this was done in Spanish Morocco, their own position would become very difficult because their people would demand similar relief. So the French Governors in French Morocco pressed the French Government to intervene and prevent the Spanish Government from doing such a thing. The French Government pointed this out to the Spanish Government, and the Spanish Government, which did not want to do anything to irritate the French Government, did not act. Now, observe how one thing leads to another. The French Government at that time was a popular front government.<sup>5</sup> One of the first functions of a popular front government should have been to deal or begin to deal with its colonial problems. It did not do so at all. I know that even in India, in Pondicherry, the tiny piece of territory belonging to France, I was astonished, on a visit there, to see the conditions. They do not permit trade unions there. Now, this popular front government functioning in Paris would not allow trade unions to be formed in Pondicherry. There are two points I wish you to consider in this respect. One is this. How a government while functioning democratically at home, unless it tackles its colonial problem, ultimately falls in its home territory too. It must have a logical policy for both, and so we had the tragic fact in Spain that the people who ought to have been behind the republican government actually were made to attack it. It is no good blaming them. They were misled, and probably all manner of promises were made to them. This was perhaps done because they were poverty-stricken. But it is well for the British, and for those people who are interested in the British Empire, and more especially those who talk in terms of democracy and in terms of opposition to fascism, to remember that they cannot ultimately be anti-fascist or go far in their fight against fascism, unless they are also anti-imperialist.

So if you want to solve this problem, you must look at it from this broader anti-imperialist aspect and think about this lining up of forces you see in the world today. You see fascism so obviously attempting

5. On 4 June 1936, Leon Blum had formed a *Front Populaire* government in France.

to advance on the one side, and the forces opposed to it trying to counter it. But the forces opposed to fascism will always be ineffective unless they are also opposed to imperialism.

In India today there is much talk about provincial autonomy, the Congress ministries and the like. But I want you to remember first of all that the Government of India functions as irresponsibly as it has ever done. We still have the various press laws functioning,<sup>6</sup> the Communist Party is still illegal,<sup>7</sup> and it is the Government of India which is responsible for that declaration. I told you at the beginning about the Sea Customs Act—we do not get most of the advanced books published in England—and in provinces like Bengal and the Punjab, we still have more or less the old system of repression so far as civil liberties and the rest go. We still have in Bengal a fair number of detenus, people kept in jail without trial, and of course our old friends, the Indian princes, still flourish in India. These Indian princes are perhaps very curious specimen of the old system—which has vanished from the rest of the world—of the purest autocracy subject of course to British suzerainty.

Now the Indian princes talk a great deal about their independence, their treaty rights and the like. Who are these Indian princes? Most of them are the creation of the British power. Most of them, the very great majority, are not princes at all—I mean to say in the technical and legal sense. They were, when the British came, barons or such. Some of them acted as viceroys of the Moghul Empire and some were just tax collectors. But then came in India the period of the fall of the Moghul Empire. It was a period of chaos and disorder, and that is why it was easy for invaders from abroad—and all manner of them did come from abroad, even before the British armies came—to sweep down and try to get what they could. When the British came and found these people functioning as big estate owners, they found it easier to deal with them than to deal with the population at large. So they made treaties with them and put them more firmly in their positions. It was since then that those people began to call themselves as princes. They had

6. The provisions of the Indian Press (Emergency Powers) Act of 1931, the Sea Customs Act of 1878, the Foreign Relations Act of 1932, the Criminal Procedure Code (section 99-A to 99G) and the Indian Penal Code, 1860, were enforced to curb freedom of the press in the country and stop the import of literature regarded as seditious.
7. The Communist Party was declared illegal when the government saw the great response received by the party to its appeal for a country-wide strike of textile workers on 23 April 1934.



no such titles previously. The people of India were of course not consulted when these treaties were made. They were made at the beginning of the 19th century, say, about 120 years ago or so. During this period, Europe and the world have changed enormously. Quite a number of big revolutions have taken place. The land system has changed. All the petty princes and others in central Europe have gone. But in India the system that existed 120 years ago has not changed. While ordinarily it would have changed, because as new events took place and as the situation developed elsewhere, the changes and revolutions would have come to India also, but the British power was there to perpetuate this feudal system. And the people who might otherwise have removed them, or kept them under control, could do nothing because it was the British power which protected them.

Obviously, India is not and cannot be split up into two parts—one comprising the Indian states and the other the rest of India. India must be an indivisible whole; it may of course ultimately be a federation—that I don't know but I see no harm in federation—but it must be one unit, and if you know anything about the history of India, you would mark the strange fact that India has been a kind of unit for thousands of years until it was divided up politically.

So we see that this states problem is often brought before us to tell us how politically the states are different from the rest of India. I do not think it is really such a difficult problem because so much pressure is now growing inside the Indian states from the side of the people living there that it cannot be resisted and the princes will have to come to terms and ally themselves with us. And suppose we had a constituent assembly, I think many of them would have had to join it sooner or later. Later, of course, all of them would have to join it.

So that today in India the situation is full of difficulty no doubt as in the rest of the world, but it is also full of hope because we feel that we are moving ahead, that we have strength, and we also feel that it is now only a question of power politics in the world. If I may put it bluntly, we shall develop our power and exercise it in the right direction.

So far as our larger ideals are concerned, this is our ideal. It is not a narrow nationalistic ideal of an isolated India cut off from the rest of the world. We believe in a world order but this must obviously be based on freedom and justice as otherwise there can be no world order. We believe in collective security. But remember this, any attempt to have collective security on an unjust *status quo* cannot possibly last. Its basis must be freedom and justice. You cannot expect us in India today to accept the *status quo* and talk in terms of preserving it by collective

security. Otherwise, we do believe in the doctrine of collective security and the development of a world order.

I have tried to deal with this problem of India from the larger perspective than merely from the point of view of the Indian nationalist movement. There is a great socialist movement in the country, which forms part of the larger movement. Personally, I look forward to the realisation of socialism in India. But here I wanted to place this problem before you not only from the point of view of the socialist but also from the points of view, more or less, common to all sections in India, at any rate, in the Congress, of the advanced sections.

Question: What is the Congress viewpoint about freedom of thought and whether under the system envisaged by the Congress, freedom of development in this respect will be allowed?

Jawaharlal Nehru : For long years past, the Congress has declared itself in favour of full freedom to think and freeing of every section of the population from any restrictions. So far as the question of freedom of thought is concerned, it was because freedom of thought was interfered with by the British Government, that inevitably our reaction was to demand it. About seven years ago, the Congress drew up a kind of a charter making provision for certain fundamental laws of the constitution.<sup>8</sup> A number of those laws were related to this question of freedom of thought, freedom of organization and association, and all the various things which go to make up civil liberties.

These things should go deep down as the fundamentals in the constitution and should not be interfered with. Also laid down in these fundamental laws was the question of freedom of religion, culture, language and the so-called minority rights.

Q: What have you to say about the minority question, the communal problem and religious rights?

JN: About the minority question, I find a number of people have asked me about religious rights and the communal problem. First of all, there is no religious problem in India. What you might perhaps consider a religious problem is somewhat different. It is a communal problem. The religious problem arises from a conflict between religions and there is no such problem because there is the completest freedom

8. See *Selected Works*, Vol. 4, pp. 511-513.





WITH KRISHNA MENON AND GENERAL LISTER IN SPAIN, JUNE 1938

# THE BOOK OF THE XV BRIGADE

*W. H. P. ...*  
*...*

RECORDS OF BRITISH, AMERICAN,  
CANADIAN, AND IRISH VOLUNTEERS IN THE  
XV INTERNATIONAL BRIGADE IN SPAIN

1936 - 1938

*James ...*  
*...*

Published by the Commissariat of War, XV Brigade  
MADRID, 1938



assured to all the groups and sections. The Congress has especially laid it down as its fundamental policy that there should always be complete freedom of religion and its practice, of course, so long as this is compatible with public morality and order.

It may be that in a vast country like India there might be a petty quarrel somewhere—that is not a matter for debate. But this communal problem is not a religious problem. It is partly political and partly economic and partly personal. At the present moment, you will find provinces in India which are entirely Muslim, like the North West Frontier Province, being on the side of the Congress. It is true that owing to certain historical background of hostility, it is not very difficult to raise some communal prejudices and passions. And do not for a moment imagine that I am trying to minimise this problem or its importance for us. But do not think of it in terms of religious strife or riots. In a vast country like India, if sometimes we hear that there has been a riot in some town or the other, we also find that the rest of the country is unaffected by it. We should not therefore lose our sense of perspective.

Then, this communal problem again used to be considered as a problem of representation in the legislatures. So far as that is concerned, it has for the moment been settled or decided by a certain decision of Mr. Ramsay MacDonald when he was Prime Minister. It was criticised very strongly, and it was never agreed to, but, nevertheless, the Congress attitude has been that we do not desire any change in it except with the consent of the parties concerned. If it is by consent, we agree.

So, in a certain way, this communal problem is an economic problem. In some places, like Bengal, the peasantry is largely Mohammedan and the landlords are Hindus. It is not a communal problem at all, but a tenant-landlord problem. But, in order to hide the main conflict, the colour of communalism and religion is given to it. In the United Provinces, it is slightly the other way round: the peasantry is largely Hindu and the landlords, Muslim. But the landlord, not wanting to be considered as a landlord, while coming into conflict with his tenants, will say the Hindu elements are in conflict with the Muslim. And today, apart from certain trivial personal factors, one sees that an attempt has been made by reactionary and semi-feudal elements—both among the Hindus and the Mohammedans—to take shelter behind the name of religion to prevent the people from joining the progressive forces, and consequently also to prevent the real problem—the economic problem—from being tackled.



If I go to the Punjab and address a meeting—and may I tell you that the meetings in India are enormous as in a meeting there may be present fifty to sixty thousand people comprising Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs—then among the questions which are put to me, no one asks me about the communal problem. What they are interested in is when is their water rate going to be reduced or when will they get relief from their tax burden? Now, can these problems be treated as communal problems? There may be a conflict between the landlord and the tenant, but there is the same conflict between the Hindu landlord and the Hindu tenant.

Remember this, there is the question of the unity of India which I referred to. It is an interesting question and I wish I could tell you something about this fascinating aspect of the Indian situation. People have an astounding conception of India's history of the past. They seem to think that before the arrival of the British people in India the only occupation of the Indian people was to cut one another's throat, and since the Englishmen established themselves there, everything has been well. Well, it is true that except for certain periods of history when Indian political unity was established, if you look at this enormous country, you would realise that it was not easy to keep such a country in political unity before modern transport and modern communications and the rest came into existence. In the past, big empires broke up because the industrial revolution had not come. But what is important is this: that India has had cultural unity for thousands of years, and I want to put before you one or two instances of this.

The basic language of India, of the whole of India, was Sanskrit—one elementary language—out of which so many languages of the present-day India have grown. Do not imagine there are hundreds of languages in India. There are ten languages which are all intimately connected with each other. Those in the north are derived from Sanskrit, and others in the south were powerfully influenced by it. One of the languages, which is the Hindustani language, is spoken by 130 million people, and it is understood by a fairly large number of others. I have no doubt that it will become the main language, not replacing the great languages, but becoming the main link between them.

There also take place in India huge conferences where representatives from all parts of the country gather and they discuss questions affecting them all. Now, this idea of holding a conference of representatives of all India is a very old idea. Representatives go from the south all the way to Kashmir to attend a conference. You find from the most ancient times the most famous places situated—one in Cape Comorin in the extreme south, another on the western coast, the



third in Puri, the extreme east, and the fourth in the extreme north in the Himalayas—and there was a constant going to and fro between these places, and a constant inter-change of ideas. And when a new idea took birth, it spread immediately all over India through controversy, talk and discussion.

And the fact of the matter was, perhaps unfortunately for India, that India and her people did not attach much importance to politics. They attached greater importance to their activities, and this was partly due to the fact that they had a very large measure of local self-government. They did not care who were at the top so long as they did not interfere with their local liberties. If two kings fought, provided it did not interfere with local liberties, the people did not mind who won. In fact, there are treaties in evidence where kings entered into agreement with the people of the town that if their wars caused any harm to their crops, they would pay compensation. So the people said—go ahead and fight. It was unfortunate that they did not take enough interest in political issues, and ultimately it did result in the people at the top depriving the rest of their local liberties.

Right through history you find this common culture of India. I should also like you to appreciate the rich civilisation inherited by us in India from our past. How many of you have heard of the great discoveries made in many places, of the magnificent cities, shop fronts, swimming pools, beautiful jewellery, toys for the children, fine statuary, etc., which are five thousand years old and which show that our civilisation is at least five thousand years old and was also contemporaneous with the earliest civilisation in Egypt? And we have had this continued from that period and, strangely enough, this civilisation appears to be essentially a secular civilisation. No temples are found anywhere in these great cities. There are things which show some kind of worship, but the people did not attach much importance to them, they did not put up huge buildings for them. Unfortunately, they got into the habit of erecting buildings later on. So that you see this history of India with its hundreds of years of positive development, with the number of conquests remarkably few for that period; and people also do not seem to realise that a number of invaders were repelled during that period.

Compared to the long vista of India's history, the last one hundred and fifty years or so, which have been so oppressive in many ways, form but a very small period and it seems as though that little chapter is also ending soon, and we are going to turn over a new page.

Q: What is the role played by Mr. Gandhi?

JN: I have talked in terms of various movements—I did not mention Mr. Gandhi's name. But I think you all must know a great deal about Mr. Gandhi. This great development of the national movement during the last twenty years, and especially its development as a mass movement, is largely the work of Mr. Gandhi. India and the Indian people owe an enormous debt to him—for he has really worked wonders. Whether some of us for particular reasons may agree or not is a matter for ourselves to decide, but the point is that in the past twenty years of India's history, he has played an amazingly important role. He has had greater influence with the Indian masses, and been more popular than perhaps you can find any other example in history, I might say. Many persons have become great after their death, but at present I am talking of a person who during his lifetime has moved such a huge mass of humanity. There is no doubt about his great services to the people of India. Please also remember that Mr. Gandhi's popularity is the same today as it ever was.

Q: Has the Congress changed its policy with regard to nonviolence?

JN: The Congress has not changed its policy. The Congress, largely at the instance of Mr. Gandhi, adopted passive methods. Mr. Gandhi, of course, laid stress on that as he believes these are the only proper methods to pursue under any circumstances.

It astounds me that somebody from this audience should think it to be a shameful matter to pursue passive methods. I should very much like to know why it is shameful. It is possible to imagine the circumstances where passive methods do not answer the purpose. That is a different matter. But to say that it is shameful to believe in passive methods is an astounding and selfish approach. Unless we are to revert to Hitlerism and barbarism or we find that there is no other way out, I think we must insist that passive methods should always be pursued.

The way Mr. Gandhi puts this before the Congress is certainly the moral way. But, after all, the Congress is a political organisation; it likes to fulfil its obligations morally, but also wants to know what will be the result of those obligations. Mr. Gandhi stressed the practical side of it which was that, in fact, we had no other alternative, and he therefore laid stress on passive methods. Remember, he was also the first person who put forward an effective plan of action. It was not merely a question of saying we should remain passive and do nothing else, but he put forward a plan involving direct action—countrywide satyagraha—which meant exertion by the whole country of a tremendous pressure. It was not merely a negative thing, and, in the last analysis, it



was the only way open to us. And that plan made a tremendous difference to India, because it gave us self-reliance, strength and capacity for united action. These were the qualities which we lacked. So the Congress adopted the use of passive and legitimate methods as one of its cardinal principles.

Now, I am not, for the moment, going into the virtues of violent or nonviolent action. I can conceive of circumstances where nonviolent action has to be abandoned in favour of other methods. That situation has not arrived in India, because we are strong enough to follow our own methods to achieve our goal. I do not know how to give a specific instance, but I do not see how I could have functioned nonviolently in Spain at the present moment. So in India also such occasions might arise.

Q: If the British were removed from India, wouldn't there be a possibility of Japanese aggression on India?

JN: So many people have asked this question about the defence of India. I wonder if any person ever takes the trouble to put himself for a moment in the position of a Japanese general thinking in terms of the conquest of India. Because the whole thing is fantastic. It is fantastic, I say, although in the world today all manner of things can happen. India can get rid of British rule either by agreement or by force. If she gets rid of it by force then it presupposes that India possesses a certain strength to resist others. And, if by agreement, then we immediately have opportunities to develop our defence forces, and in that case, any aggression on India might create bigger complications.

But let us leave out England for the moment. Japan would take longer time to come to India than to England. The passage from Japan to India is one of the most complicated and difficult to navigate with its narrow straits. It is impossible for Japan to come overland or by air because of the great mountains and deserts. It must therefore come by sea, and the sea route is complicated and difficult. And Japan is not likely to undertake such a rash adventure unless it was safe in its home waters. It would never think of it unless it had subjugated and absorbed the whole of China, a task which is highly unlikely it will ever accomplish. Even so, it would expose its flanks to great hostile powers, to the U.S.S.R. and America. Then again, it would probably think in terms of easier prey like the Dutch Indies, or Australia, or the Phillipine Islands, so that the Japanese generals, before ever thinking of India, would have many other things to dispose of. Finally, if they decide to come to India, they will get a fitting reply.

Q: What is the role of women in the Congress?

JN: Of course, there are a large number of women in the Congress, and, as a rule, they function more aggressively than men. But really it is a curious phenomenon how our national movement has affected the women of India. When about thirty to fifty thousand men were imprisoned in India suddenly, their places were taken by thousands of women who had previously done no such work. They came out into the streets and took charge of the situation and became very aggressive. That in itself shows how the widespread national movement is affecting the entire Indian life.

Q: In case there is war between British imperialism and the fascist countries, what would India do?

JN: I do not know whether there will be war or not. But, obviously, British imperialism draws closer and closer to fascism, and so far as its policy is concerned, it has completely changed, and it is obviously pro-fascist today. It is possible to conceive of two imperialisms coming into conflict, or British imperialism coming into conflict with fascism. Remember, the armament programme is meant for that because I do not see any other big conflict facing British imperialism. I do not think it is immediately meant for Russia, though ultimately the conflict may be with her.

Q: Suppose this contingency arises, what then?

JN: Obviously, our sympathies are not with fascism. We are also opposed to imperialism. The Indian National Congress has repeatedly declared that it is not going to be dragged into war by the British Government, and any attempt to do so would be resisted. The only party that can decide this matter is the Indian people.

In case there is war, it is hardly likely to be other than an imperialist war, and we do not want to be exploited for the sake of any imperialism. In other words, if India is a free country, an independent country, then it is quite possible that in a conflict involving two rival forces, of which one may more or less be representing the aggressive side, the reactionary side, and the other, the progressive side, then it would be both in India's interest, and to her ultimate advantage, to see that the progressive side wins. But, if India, as a subject country, is to be exploited, that would not be tolerated.



Q: Is there fascism in India?

JN: There are fascist tendencies in India, particularly in the Indian states.

Q: What about India's relations with Ceylon and Burma?

JN: In regard to Ceylon and Burma, we would very much welcome them if they chose to join a future Indian republic or a federation, but obviously that must be left to the people of Ceylon and Burma. There can be no compulsion in the matter.

Q: What about the anarchical conditions which would prevail if the British withdrew from India?

JN: A slightly similar question was put to me the other day. What would happen on the north west frontier, I was asked in solemn tones, if the British forces withdrew? I replied, "There will be celebrations on both sides of the frontier."

## 23. Civil Liberties in India<sup>1</sup>

Two or three years ago civil liberties hardly existed in India. The many ordinances and other measures have completely restricted them. But since the Congress took over the government in some provinces, there has been a considerable change. One of the first acts of the Congress ministries was to resume civil liberties as far as they were able to do so. There was a conflict with the Governors over this. Ultimately the Governors and the Viceroy gave way, because they were apprehensive of the consequences. If they had not, the constitution would have lapsed, and the Governors would have been obliged to govern under something akin to martial law.

1. Speech at the National Council of Civil Liberties, London, 7 July 1938. From *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 9 July 1938.

I am feeling the strain of too many engagements, and I am not very fit at present. I hope to take a few days off in France soon.

I have met all manner of people, but about that I shall write to you later.

Dr. Atal will be returning to India in a few days' time. Some money has been raised for the unit here, and out of this I have advanced some to Atal for the purpose of purchasing various articles which cannot be obtained in India. We have also advanced some money for his fare back to India and asked him to produce accounts before the China committee in India. That committee must decide about the fare. I think it will be desirable for it to approve of the payment of second class fare for him.

Yours affectionately,  
Jawahar

## 26. To Subhas Chandra Bose<sup>1</sup>

London  
14th July, 1938

My dear Subhas,

I wanted to write to you at some length about what I have done here but this must wait for the moment. Meanwhile I am writing about the China medical unit. Atal is sailing in a few days for India. We have collected about £300 here for the unit and we may collect a little more. We had no time to get the permission of your committee for certain expenditure here—some articles had to be purchased which could not be obtained in India, such as gas masks. I have asked Atal to buy them and advanced the money for the purpose. Atal also wanted to know if his fare to India would be paid. I told him that this is for the committee in India to decide, but we have advanced him money for the purpose and asked him to give full accounts of all expenditure to your committee for their approval and sanction. Altogether we have advanced him £150.

I think it will be desirable for your committee to sanction second class fare to India for him, but it is entirely for you to decide whether this should be sanctioned or not. He will meet you soon after reaching India and discuss the whole situation with you.

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.



I am distressed to learn from Kripalani that our foreign department and other departments are not functioning properly. I am afraid I cannot do anything for them so long as I am here. There is so much work to be done at the other end and it is unfortunate that we are not doing it.

Kripalani sent me the Muslim League resolutions<sup>2</sup> in reply to the memorandum to Jinnah. These resolutions are absurd and preposterous and it is impossible to agree to them. I suppose you have already come to your decision.

I hope to go to Paris next week and then to the south of France for a few days' rest.

Yours affectionately,  
Jawahar

2. The Congress memorandum of 14 May 1938 stated its terms for any understanding with the Muslim League. Unequivocal support should be given to the Congress in its fight for independence and its opposition to the federal scheme and the right of the Congress to work among the Muslim masses should be fully recognised. Muslim League members, if they joined the Congress ministries, should be amenable to Congress Party discipline. The Council of the Muslim League, meeting on 4-5 June 1938, while conceding the Congress claim of being a national organisation demanded that the Congress should recognise the Muslim League as "the only representative organisation of the Mussalmans of India." If that were done, the League would go ahead with the negotiations.

## 27. On Federation<sup>1</sup>

Some people seem to be of the opinion that I have been carrying on negotiations with officials and others. As a matter of fact, I did not come here with any such purpose, I did not discuss with any person,

1. Interview to the press, London, 14 July 1938. *The Hindustan Times*, 15 July 1938.

either publicly or privately, any question of amendment of the Government of India Act. Inevitably I met people—officials and others—and discussed various aspects of Indian and other problems. I endeavoured to place the Indian viewpoint before them, but there was no question of my trying to get something out of anybody. We do not think in such terms in India; we are not working even for the slightest change in the Government of India Act, for the simple reason that we do not want the Act. It seems to me that there is a much wider appreciation in England now of the real nature of the Indian question and its wider implications. Most thinking people realise that the nationalist movement is far stronger than it has ever been and that any attempt to impose anything against its will, will lead to serious conflict.

This reality is being appreciated more though it may still be that the Indian question may be overshadowed by international affairs. I have tried to connect the two, so that people look on the Indian question in relation to international affairs and crises of wars. I have found that where it is so considered, it immediately assumes greater importance in the eyes of others. Naturally, Indian developments may play an important part in affecting the British.

At present, British foreign policy is resented in India, and we see no reason whatever why we should be parties thereto. This becomes yet another reason why we should have our own foreign policy and complete independence. I think that people in England are beginning to realise that the only solution of the Indian problem is to allow the Indian people to frame their own constitution through a constituent assembly. This is the only democratic, possible way, open to us, and, inevitably, it will have to be adopted sometime or other.

Some experts maintain that the navy is out of date. Defence is a technical rather than a political issue, but the first and most effective arm must be the air. We, however, cannot rely on armies and navies of others to defend us. It would be highly improper to talk about independence in terms of the British army and navy. We would like close cooperation with England and probably an alliance, but we do not look upon this problem as one where we stand helplessly by and ask for protection.

Until India is in a position to build her own aeroplanes, she would have to buy elsewhere. There is bound to be a gap of period, but India is prepared to take the risk. Individual Congressmen certainly considered the major question of defence in relation to immediate responsibility. The Sino-Japanese war confirms my opinion that it would be difficult for Japan to operate over a long distance.



I realise that it would take time to train officers and others, but recent events have shown that competent armies could be raised fairly rapidly. Of course, India's foreign policy would be one of world peace. India would associate herself with those powers who stand for world peace and collective security. Moreover, India would want a popular army and not a mercenary force.

The nationalist movement, in the last few years, has made rapid strides. This has been made possible due to increasing participation by the Indians in the movement and also due to activities of the Indians abroad.

My recent remarks about the non-existence of civil liberties in Bengal and other places have evoked criticism from Bengal. I however do not want to argue, but I do not retract from what I have said about the Bengal Government. I think that a feeling of hostility would remain in India against England, as in Ireland. Such a feeling should be removed, because it is such a waste of energy. The real way to deal with it is for India to be absolutely free and able to decide what she wants. This would provide a firm basis for friendly cooperation.

## 28. Peace and Empire<sup>1</sup>

This conference has been held on the invitation of the India League and the London Federation of Peace Councils, to consider problems of peace and empire. Peace and Empire—a curious combination of words and ideas fundamentally opposed to each other, and yet I think it was a happy idea to put them together in this way, and to convene this conference. I do not suppose we can have peace in this world unless we do away with imperialist ideas. Therefore the essence of the problem of peace is the problem of empire.

So long as empires continue to flourish we may have periods when open war between states does not take place, but even then there is no peace, for conflict and preparation for war continue. There is conflict between rival imperialist states, between the dominating power and the subject people, and between classes. The very basis of the imperialist state is coercion of subject peoples and their exploitation; inevitably this

1. Presidential address at the conference on Peace and Empire, London, 15 July 1938. *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 22 July 1938. Reprinted in *The Unity of India*, (London, 1941), pp. 268-277.

is resented and attempts are made to overthrow this domination. On this basis no peace can be founded.

Now you and I in these days of fascist aggression often labour to do something to check the fascist menace, but not always to check the imperialist idea too. Many people seek to distinguish between the two. They do not think much of the imperialist idea, but consider that we might carry on with it for a time, although we cannot possibly do with fascism. I wish you would consider that in this conference, and try to find out how far we can distinguish between the two.

Perhaps because I come from a country which is under imperialism, I attach a great deal of importance to this question of empire. But apart from that, I feel that you cannot distinguish between the two conceptions of fascism and empire, and that fascism is indeed an intensified form of the same system which is imperialism. Therefore, if you seek to combat fascism you inevitably combat imperialism.

We have to face an extraordinarily difficult and complex situation when the embattled legions of fascist reaction threaten the world and are often encouraged and supported by other imperialist governments. The reactionary forces of the world gather together and consolidate themselves, and in order to face them and check them we must also forget our petty differences and hold together.

We find fascism spreading and all manner of propaganda going on in imperialist states and in other countries. Perhaps you know that in South America today there is tremendous propaganda on the part of the fascist states. We also find imperialist countries gradually drifting towards fascism, although sometimes they talk the language of democracy at home. They must do so because they cannot, owing to their imperialist foundation and background, ultimately resist fascism unless they give up that background.

There is a kind of consolidation of the forces of reaction. How are we to meet this? By consolidating the forces of progress against reaction. And if those who represent the forces of progress are inclined to split up and argue too much about minor matters, and thereby endanger the major issue, then they will be incapable of effectively resisting the fascist and imperialist menace. At any time it would be a matter for your consideration, that we hold together. But with all manner of difficulties facing us, it becomes an imperative necessity.

Now only a joint front, not a national joint front, but a world joint front, can achieve our purpose. And out of the horrors we have gone through, the most hopeful signs that come to us are those which point towards the consolidation of the forces of progress and peace all over the world.



You will remember how in China there was internal conflict which weakened the nation. But when Japanese aggression came last year we beheld a people who had been bitterly fighting amongst themselves and destroying each other, who had built up enormous bitterness against each other, still being great enough to see the menace, and to organize and unite themselves to fight it. Today, and for the last year, we have seen a united people in China fighting the invasion. In the same way, you will find in every country more or less successful attempts at unity growing up and you find all over the world these various national united groups looking for international solidarity.

In Europe and the West, where progressive groups have a longer history and different background, you have both advantages and disadvantages. But in Asia, where such groups have recently come into existence, the issue is often clouded by the nationalist issue, and one cannot think of it so easily in terms of internationalism, obviously because we have to think first of all in terms of national political feeling.

Even so, these modern developments, and especially what has happened in Abyssinia, in Spain and in China, have now forced people to think in terms of internationalism. We find a remarkable change in some of these countries of Asia, for even though we were engrossed in our struggles, we began to think more and more of the social struggles in other parts of the world, and to feel more and more that they affected us because they affected the entire world.

If we desire to resist the fascist menace effectively, we must equally oppose imperialism, or else we fail. The foreign policy of Britain is an example of this pitiful failure, for thinking in terms of imperialism it cannot resist fascist aggression or ally itself to the progressive forces of the world. And in so failing it is even helping in the disruption of its own empire which it seeks to preserve. We have here a significant example of the basic kinship of imperialism with fascism and of the contradictions which imperialism itself presents.

If we are convinced, as I take it most of us are, that imperialism is akin to fascism, and both are enemies of peace, then we must seek to remove both, and not try to distinguish between the two. Therefore, we have to seek to root out imperialism itself, and seek a complete freedom for all the subject peoples of the world.

Now we are often told that instead of the imperialist conception, we should develop the conception of the commonwealth of nations. This is a phrase which appeals to one, because we all want a commonwealth of nations in this world. But if we think in terms of an empire gradually being transformed into a commonwealth, almost retaining its own structure economically and politically, then it seems to me that we are

likely to delude ourselves very greatly. We cannot have a real commonwealth of nations born of empire. It must have different parents.

In the British Commonwealth you have a number of countries which are almost independent. But let us not forget that in the British Empire there is a vast area and a vast population which is completely subject, and if you think that this subject population is gradually going to become an equal partner in that commonwealth, you will find enormous difficulties. You will find that if that process is somehow achieved in a political way, there will be many economic bonds which are inconsistent with a free commonwealth, which will not permit real freedom for those subject people, but will prevent them from changing their economic order if they wish, and will prevent them from solving their social problems.

Every one of us, I suppose, is in favour of a real commonwealth of nations. But why seek to limit it to a few countries and nations? That means that you are building up one group to oppose another group. In other words, you are building on the conception of empire and one empire comes into conflict with another empire. That may reduce the danger of war within a group, but it increases the danger of war between groups.

Therefore, if we think in terms of a real commonwealth, we must necessarily abandon the ideas of imperialism, and build afresh on a new basis—a basis of complete freedom for all peoples. For the sake of such an order each nation should be prepared to shed, in common with others, some of the attributes of sovereignty. On this basis we can achieve collective security and establish peace.

Today in Asia, Africa and elsewhere, there are enormous populations which are subject, and until we get rid of that subjection, and imperialist ideas cease to exist, we will find this is a thorn in the side of peace.

The mandatory system in Africa and elsewhere is, I think, a very dangerous idea, because it covers a bad thing under a fair name. Essentially it is the imperialist system continuing in another guise. It is always dangerous to make one person the trustee of another, and allow him to profit by it. It may be that in some countries where you intend establishing complete freedom the same form of government may not be established as quickly in one place as in another, but you must proceed on the basis of complete freedom for every subject people, and then proceed in a practical way to help them if necessary. Although, personally, I rather distrust these offers of help, occasionally they may be necessary. But I do not think you will find a way out through this mandatory system, for it is founded on the same basis as imperialism.

I mentioned to you the growing solidarity of the various peoples, their feeling of international fellowship and comradeship because of this crisis.



The growth of this international fellowship would be jeopardized by the exclusion of nations who want to be friendly. The people of India have for ages past been on very friendly terms with the people of China. There has never been any conflict between them. May I venture to correct our friend who conveyed the greetings of the people of China? He said that the Chinese came to India in the twelfth century. He was out by one thousand years; they came one thousand years previously to India, and we have still records from their books of their visits. So we have had these long contacts, but apart from that, this recent crisis in China and the world has brought us much nearer to each other. We should like to hold together, we should like to cooperate together for the peace and progress of the world. Why should we not be able to do so if we wish?

So if you look at the world as it is today, you may find countries who for some reason or another will not join a world order, but that is no reason why we should not start to build up that world order, and not limit it to a certain number of nations.

Therefore, a conception of a limited commonwealth must be combated and a conception of a larger commonwealth must grow up. Only then can we really achieve our aim of collective security. We want collective security, but I want to make my meaning quite clear. It is not the meaning that has been attached to it by Mr. Neville Chamberlain. My idea of collective security, to begin with, is not to retain a *status quo* which is based on injustice. We cannot have security that way. The essential corollary is the removal of imperialism and fascism.

We find today an extraordinary state of affairs in the world. We find people who are apparently intelligent following contradictory policies, and increasing the general mess and muddle of the world. In this country, in Britain, we have seen an extraordinary foreign policy developed. Most of you are opposed to it. Nevertheless, it is strange that such a thing should happen, and to an outsider it is very, very difficult to understand it from any point of view. We see today a government in Britain which presumably is interested in maintaining the British Empire, acting in a way which militates against the interests of that empire.

I am not interested in maintaining that empire, but I am interested in ending that empire in a proper way.

The general public may perhaps approve of this policy because of its confusion in regard to imperialism and fascism. This is a significant example of how imperialism, when driven into a corner, is bound to side with fascism. You cannot keep the two apart. When today these major issues confront the world, imperialists who have become more class conscious than ever seek the preservation of their class interests even at

risk to the safety and preservation of their imperial interests in the future.

We come, therefore, to this, that we have to base any policy that we evolve on true foundations, and to root out the real evil. The problem of central Europe, Czechoslovakia, Spain, China and many other problems, we realize, ought to be brought together and considered as a whole.

May I also remind you of another problem about which perhaps we do not think in this connection so often, but which is very much before us these days, the problem of Palestine? This is a peculiar problem and we are apt to think of it too much in terms of conflict between the Arabs and the Jews. May I remind you to begin with that right through 2,000 years there has never been any real conflict between the Arabs and the Jews in Palestine? It is a problem which has recently arisen, since the war. It is fundamentally a problem created by British imperialism in Palestine, and unless you keep that in mind, you will not solve it. Nor is it likely to be solved by British imperialism.

It is true that this has become at the present moment rather a difficult problem because of the passions it has roused. What then is really the problem in Palestine?

The Jews are there, and every one of us has the greatest sympathy for the Jews, especially today, when they are being persecuted and hounded out of various countries of Europe. Although the Jews have erred in many ways, they have done a considerable service to the country since they came into Palestine. But you must remember that Palestine has been essentially an Arab country and this movement is basically a national struggle for the independence of the Arabs. It is not an Arab-Jew problem. It is essentially a struggle for independence. It is not a religious problem. Perhaps you know that both Arab Muslims and Christians are completely united in this struggle. Perhaps you know that the old Jews, resident in Palestine before the war, have taken very little part in this struggle, because they have been closely associated with their Arab neighbours. It is quite understandable that the Arab people should resist any attempts to deprive them of their country. Any people would. An Irishman, Scotsman or Englishman would do the same. It is a question of not wanting to be pushed out of one's own country and the desire for freedom and independence.

So that the Arab people started this movement for the independence of their country, but British imperialism played its hand so cleverly that the conflict became the conflict between Arabs and Jews, and the British Government cast itself in the role of umpire.

The problem of Palestine can only be solved in one way, and that is by the Arabs and Jews ignoring British imperialism and coming to an



agreement with each other. Personally, I think that there are many Arabs and Jews who desire to find a solution of the problem in this way. Unfortunately, recent events have created difficulties which have been played upon by imperialist elements, and it may be some time before the Arabs and Jews can come together, but it should be our business and duty to stress this viewpoint and to make it clear—(1) that you cannot solve this problem by trying to crush the Arab people; (2) that it will not be settled by British imperialism but by the two main parties coming together and agreeing to terms.

I do not propose to refer to the large numbers of countries which are subject countries, or countries which have other social troubles today, because almost every country has them. It may be that we can consider their problems later on, but I do think we must not forget the countries of Africa, because probably no people in the world have suffered so much, and have been exploited so much in the past as the people of Africa.

It may be that in the process of exploitation to some extent even my own countrymen have taken part. I am sorry for that. So far as we in India are concerned, the policy we wish to follow is this. We do not want anyone from India to go to any country and to function anywhere against the wishes of the people of that country, whether it is Burma, East Africa, or any other part of the world. I think the Indians in Africa have done a great deal of good work. Some of them have also derived a great deal of profit. I think Indians in Africa or elsewhere can be useful members of the community. But only on this basis do we welcome their remaining there, that the interests of the people of Africa are always placed first.

I suppose you realize that if India were free it would make a tremendous difference to the conception of empire throughout the world and all subject people would benefit thereby.

We think of India, China and other countries but we are too often apt to forget Africa and the people of India want you to keep them in mind. After all, though the people of India would welcome the help and sympathy of all progressive people, they are today perhaps strong enough to fight their own battle, whilst that may not be true of some of the peoples of Africa. Therefore, the people of Africa deserve our special consideration.

Most of you will probably agree with the ideas I have put forward. Many people outside this hall may not agree with them. Many people may say these are idealistic notions and have nothing to do with the modern world. I do not think there could be any more foolish notion than that. We shall only solve our problems today by proceeding in this

way, and if you think we can solve them without raising these fundamental issues, you are highly mistaken.

Here is a small example of today in dealing with these problems. The example is of the Moors in Spanish Morocco. There was delay in dealing with their problem and the fascist clique in Spain took advantage of this and deceived these poor unfortunate Moors by making them all manner of false promises and enlisting them on its side to attack the very people who were likely to give freedom to them. That kind of thing will happen again and again if this issue is not faced properly.

We can hardly expect a subject country to show enthusiasm about the freedom of others when its own people remain subject.

Therefore, in India, we have made it perfectly clear and the Congress has declared that it can play no part in any imperialist war. So long as India is subject, it is an absurdity to expect it to give its men and resources in a cause which might be in favour of strengthening an empire.<sup>2</sup> The right way to deal with the situation is to root out imperialism, to give complete freedom to the subject peoples and then to approach them in a friendly manner, to come to terms with them. If the approach is made in that manner, they will be friendly. Otherwise, there will be constant hostility, trouble and conflict, and when the crisis develops and peril comes, all manner of complications will arise and it is not easy to say what will happen. Therefore, I beg all of you to remember and realize that we are not dealing with distant idealistic solutions today, but with current problems, and if we neglect them and evade them, we do so at our peril.

2. The conference in one of its resolutions passed on 16 July 1938 welcomed the increasingly active role played by the Indian National Congress in international affairs and noted with satisfaction the Congress declaration that the people of India are ready to cooperate with other peoples in defence of peace and collective security but that they will not, as a subject nation within the British Empire, allow their strength and resources to be used for imperialist war purposes of their rulers.



## 29. The Congress and Collective Security<sup>1</sup>

We have after all had an extraordinary gathering and if you go through the long list of organisations represented, it is a singular education for us in international matters.

Now there has been an argument about a particular resolution which was placed before us and I have tried to follow that argument very closely. I am intelligent enough to appreciate what lay behind that argument and yet, because I have myself not been entangled in this argument, I cannot exactly get excited about it nor understand the reason for all this excitement.

I pointed out that when the Congress passed the resolution it did not think for a moment of either side in this argument as it has been presented to you. It was not worried by reason of various opinions held by other organisations. Yet it arrived at that conclusion. What does it signify? Obviously the Indian National Congress is going to act, as all organisations ultimately act, in its own selfish interests whenever the occasion arises for it to act. But it has begun to realise more and more that its self-interest leads to what might appear to be an unselfish action, which is to work for international solidarity and cooperation with other progressive forces. But when it cooperates it is not with the missionary spirit of doing good to others, but out of realisation of the need for acting and cooperating for the common good of all. Therefore the Congress came to its conclusion in regard to world collective security.

Now I suppose the real issue is what is meant by collective security and it might be that the people would not ask this if they analysed their conception. Obviously, for an Indian it has no meaning if the collective security involves the subjection of India. Similarly, any person who is a subject, will not be very much interested in assisting to maintain a *status quo* which involves his subjection. Yet, it is not such a simple issue as that. Conditions may arise when it may be to our advantage to get rid of that subjection and get rid of collective security at the same time.

1. Concluding speech at the conference on Peace and Empire, London, 16 July 1938. From *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 22 July 1938.

I cannot lay down a hard and fast rule. No practical politician can do that long beforehand, and in speaking to you I am not prepared to do that. I have functioned for many years as what might be called an agitator. At the same time, the time has come in India when though we have still to function as agitators, but as agitators also we have to think when we can. Our organisation has given advice which we know, if it is adopted, will convulse the entire country. We cannot lightly give that advice. In the past, we have carried on our movement and gone forward, I suppose, knowing that we were not strong enough to achieve our aim. Now, suppose I go and put a certain proposal before the Congress today and it adopts it, it would mean that millions of people would act upon it and follow that advice. It is no light burden that the Congress has to carry when it means upsetting the whole system in India.

Therefore I am not prepared to say exactly how under a certain set of circumstances we shall act, but I can tell you that we are prepared to act with only one thought in our minds. Firstly, it is for the achievement of the independence of India that we shall continue to strive, and secondly, because we do believe, and we are convinced, that this isolated national independence is out of date and cannot exist for long in future, that we cannot always consider problems in terms of isolated national independence. We have to consider it in a larger way. If we think only in terms of national independence, I feel we would not go a long way. The Indian National Congress must think in larger terms, must think of the greater perils that are overshadowing the world and try to avert these perils.

I have carefully read the resolution you have passed and having read it I found there was nothing about it with which I disagreed. If there had been anything in it, with which I disagreed, probably I would have drawn your attention to it or expressed myself previously.

The reference to the National Congress resolution is not a complete reference, it is true. It does not give everything that the Congress resolution says. But in so far as the reference goes, it is a correct reference. You have the text of the Indian National Congress resolution and you can yourself read and judge it. But I do think that there is nothing in this resolution that you have passed which misinterprets or puts a false meaning to that resolution. It does not give the full significance of that resolution and I felt that when I read it; but I did not think it necessary that a resolution should go into a detailed analysis of a resolution made by another organisation. Therefore I accepted the resolution from several points of view. Firstly, because I saw nothing in it to which I objected. If I had been given the drafting of it, I might have drafted



it differently—I might have put it more tersely. But the point was this: there was nothing that I objected to, and it is a tremendous thing, looked at from the point of view of a resolution passed by a large number of organisations. I do attach importance to that.

I have functioned in the Indian National Congress, which itself is composed of many groups and many viewpoints, and it has been inevitable that these groups pressed for their respective viewpoints, and many people imagine that the Congress is going to split up and are disappointed when it is not split up, and in spite of these varying viewpoints we have been wise enough to hold together and to have the fullest and most vital differences and yet, when we have arrived at a decision, to hold by that decision. I do not mean to say that we must sacrifice principles for the sake of unity, but after all we are, I take it, not only the people with revolutionary tendencies, but people who want results, and we hope to achieve them in the not distant future. We have to be realists and idealists at the same time. Strength comes from mass organisation, mass effort and a united effort.

If the National Congress is strong today, it is because it happens to have millions of Indian people behind it. Therefore it presumes to go ahead because ultimately what counts is the consciousness of strength. This strong organisation may become terribly powerful and may upset our little appercart.

Suppose I go to the Congress with a proposition—it happens frequently with me—and my proposition is rejected. I find that hard. However, should I walk out of the Congress? I don't do this because I have always felt I would be playing false to the Congress and the cause I represent, and that I should be doing what the British imperialists desire in India to happen. Therefore I put up with it and with all our arguments in the Congress. For I may remind you of that saying that unless we hang together we are likely to hang separately.

May I in conclusion thank all the delegates and organisations represented here, especially the delegates, for their indulgence to me in spite of slight waves of excitement, and the organisers, who have taken a tremendous deal of trouble behind the scene? I think they can well feel satisfied with their resolution, and I think it will have far-reaching and desirable consequences.

### 30. The Spirit of Indian Nationalism<sup>1</sup>

The people of England have a good deal of responsibility for what has happened in India in the past few generations. I do not say that just in a spirit of criticism, because many things have happened in the past which it is not easy to forget, but still we will try to forget for the sake of our larger comradeship. You know that nationalist struggle generates feelings of bitterness, almost of hatred. After all nationalism is something anti, anti-foreign government may be almost racial—it is a negative thing which has a definite positive side to it also. It is not a good thing taken by itself. Usually too much of it—too great a dose of it—stunts a race, although at the same time, at a certain stage, it is something that makes a race grow.

It has two aspects—an aspect of leading a people to freedom and another aspect which you see so much in Europe today—something which leads to the reverse of freedom. And so nationalism often has been in the past, something which unhappily brings hatred and rivalry between different people in its train.

Now fortunately in India in spite of the whole background of Indian history during the last 150 years—and it has been a terrible background—in the great struggle in which we have been engaged more or less continuously during the last 18 or 20 years, it has been remarkable that we have kept our movement singularly free from racial bitterness and for that, as you know, the credit must go to the great and noble lead which Mr. Gandhi has given. He gave that lead for moral reasons, for ethical reasons, as well as for good solid practical reasons. However that may be, there is another reason which perhaps helps us in considering these problems in a scientific way, in an unemotional way, and that is the reason which a socialist might advance, and is also one of the reasons why I welcome this kind of gathering, this kind of enthusiasm which this gathering represents, partly British, partly Indian, partly international. Such a gathering represents the level to which we are raised in our struggle and the way we look upon it.

1. Speech at Kingsway Hall, London. From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 16 July 1938.



And, no sooner we think of it in these larger international terms than we immediately forget these racial backgrounds, and we feel, you and I, and all of us feel in this way that we are comrades in a joint adventure, although that adventure extends not to India only but also to Spain and China and very much so to Europe today. And although by the very excess of your cordiality and welcome you have embarrassed me, still, believing and realising the significance of this that it is a gesture on your part, a stretching out of your hand in good fellowship to the people of India, I appreciate it, and I thank you for it. But this I want you to realise and you will forgive me if I stress this point, that gestures, though welcome, do not go very far. I am not, however, pushing this argument further but I do want you to consider this question of India in its true context.

What is that context? Three years ago I was in England and I was told by a large number of people, people not only of the so-called right wing but also of the left wing, that India for the moment is out of the picture here. We have had enough of India. We must devote ourselves to other problems and we are not going to devote more time to it for some years. That kind of thing was not very pleasant to me, although, frankly speaking, I may tell you it did not make much difference to me or to India. But it pained me because I felt that your movement here which is connected with social, political and various other kinds of freedom, is a part of the social, economic and political freedom all over the world. I felt that you were somehow talking in the air, because if your conception of freedom is a limited freedom, there is something very radically wrong with that conception. So when people at that time wished me well in India, I was grateful for their good wishes but I saw that their wishes made little difference to me. We had come to realise in India that after all if we were to achieve anything, it would only be through the strength that we developed in India. But what pained me more was that I felt that here in England or elsewhere in Europe, the whole method and mode of approach to this problem was wrong.

I give you an analogy which is very much to the fore now. There is great indignation at the bombing of Barcelona and Canton and very rightly. It is inhuman and horrible and only a very few days ago I was myself a witness, not once but at least seven or eight times, to the bombing of Barcelona. A horrible thing and it is an experience I am not likely to forget as long as I live. I want you to appreciate that this bombing of Barcelona and Canton are of the same type, may be not in the same degree, but there is no difference in principle between the bombing of Barcelona and the bombing of the north west frontier. I want you to

appreciate that if England or the British Government is responsible for the bombing of the frontier in India, it is quite impossible for it to condemn the bombing of any other place. You know well that all over the rest of the world this attitude of the British Government in sometimes condemning other powers when they bomb, and not themselves stopping their own bombing is a matter for ribald jests, and rightly so, because they have landed themselves in an extraordinary state where everything they say is pure quibbling. They cannot justify any protest which they might make because of the action they are taking.

In the same way you cannot appreciate this whole question of India unless you are quite clear in your own minds as to what imperialism is, that imperialism is a bad thing and must go not only from India but wherever it exists. So long as you are not clear, all the goodwill and sympathy you may feel for India will not take you very far. Therefore, I want you to think about this and to see this question of India in its larger conflict of imperialism and anti-imperialism. I do not want you or even ask you to think of India apart from the rest of the world. If you consider that question in relation to the larger problems of the world, only then will you understand it properly, only then will you be able to help in that cause. Otherwise it may be that although you may feel sympathetic today, if you have not understood the real implications of the problem then something may happen in a time of crisis when the British Government may do something and you may get swept off because you have not grasped that problem.

That problem is the problem of removal of imperialism and not of giving federation or autonomy. People ask me and they expect me to deal with the question of federation and about some of the provincial ministries which are under Congress control. They are interested that I should tell them something about these. I do not propose to do so, not due to lack of time, but because I want to concentrate on major issues. Do not get lost in these subsidiary and petty problems that fill the papers to the exclusion of the real problem. If the provincial ministries have helped us in one way they have hindered us in another, and as a result we have to face difficult problems.

I have been accustomed in India to speak to large gatherings of peasants. For the moment, I should like you to forget me, if you can, and to think of these millions of peasants of India. It is the hunger and poverty of these millions which constitute the real problem of India and not whether federation should be like this or that or how the provincial autonomy should function. The problem of India is essentially, primarily and fundamentally, the problem of the peasants of India as also of the workers and others. Therefore, if you want to understand



the problem and solve it, you will have to think in terms of removing that poverty from India, and raising all those masses of Indian peasants and workers to a level which can be called a human level. Once you consider the problem from that point of view, and not from the point of quibbling about federation, you will get an entirely different basis.

I may tell you that you cannot solve the problem by holding meetings of the British cabinet or of any other imperialist government. I tell you as one who has endeavoured to study history, that when a democratic power is fundamentally unable to solve the real problems of the people that it governs, then that government cannot last long and you will find that government getting overwhelmed by social revolution. The British Government is incapable of solving the great question of poverty in India. Therefore, if history teaches us anything at all, it teaches us that British imperialism must go from India.

That does not mean that you and I and the people of India are going to wait, doing nothing and expecting history to do things for us. I want you to appreciate that this is not a statute in a parliament which is being debated. It is a vital matter which affects hundreds of millions of people. If the Indian National Congress has grown in strength and shaken the might of the British Empire, how has it been so? You will remember that we tried a unique method of combating this empire. Peaceful though it was, it was not a pacific method, it was an aggressive method. It was a method which brought tremendous pressure on it.

What strength lay behind the Indian Congress? We had great leaders undoubtedly, but it is not the leaders that gave it strength, it was the people, the peasantry, and if you go further back still, it was the hunger of India. So long as that hunger is not satisfied, this fight will go on, despite all constitutions, despite what the British Government may or may not do in India. This is a fundamental reality to be appreciated. I want you to feel in those terms if you have this reality of India before you. During the last two years I wandered about India a good deal, and I do not know how many millions of eyes I have looked into during those two years and how many millions of eyes looked up at me, but everywhere I found the same hungry look, the same misery looking out of those eyes though, often enough, one also saw a new gleam of hope that hunger and misery were coming to an end. It is this background of poverty and hunger which makes the Indian problem look so serious and I therefore want you to appreciate that so long as this problem is not solved, you will find it proving a burden to the entire world. I therefore beg of you to think on these lines.

It is childish for any people to say that we shall dispose of this problem. We have had enough of it. It is too difficult and we have many diffi-

cult problems in the world today apart from the problem of India. May I also tell you that you are developing the habit of looking away from difficult problems and not trying to solve them? That is why when I speak to you here or anywhere else in England, I perhaps speak in a different key, in a different tone, because I am apt to tell you that when I speak on behalf of the Indian people, I do so with a measure of confidence that the Indian people are going to solve their problem, however difficult it may be.

Sometimes I find here in England, and elsewhere in Europe, a want of confidence. I notice a feeling of being overwhelmed by the problems. But, how curious it is that I, who comes from a country that is still subject to British imperialism and which is still governed by the British Government, should speak to you, not only with confidence, but with the conviction of triumph in my eyes, and you should have the misfortune to put up with the kind of thing you are putting up, and show yourselves to be helpless and unable to do anything. Sometimes I think that it may be that your movements here which aim at greater social freedom may be helped ultimately by what we do in India.

I must add that I do not wish to minimise our difficulties. They are great. To raise 360 millions of people, who for generations past have been subject to exploitation, is a difficult problem. You can change constitutions, and you can change laws, but it is not so easy to ameliorate the conditions of living of the vast millions, to educate them and to raise the standard of living of the people in a big country like ours. Still, we have the courage to say that we shall face these problems. But, what however distresses me, as it must distress you, is this degradation of spirit which seems to grow all over the world and which ultimately is represented in the most obvious, in the most crude and grossest form by what is called fascism.

You, who cheer when I condemn fascism, remember this, that fascism is a near relative of imperialism. Your condemnation of fascism is of little value unless in your heart and by your words and actions you also condemn imperialism. You have perhaps been shocked by the extent to which civilised people can go in perpetrating excesses, but surprising as they are, may I inform you that in India although some of the excesses that we read about are new to us, the atmosphere in which such excesses take place is thoroughly familiar to us? It did not shock us as it did shock you. The difference is that you have grown accustomed to a thing that has been happening for a long time under the name of imperialism, but when it came in a different garb you were shocked. Rightly so, but you ought to have been shocked earlier also. Therefore I beg of you to go down to the roots of this problem and see if it leads



you to the same conclusion. It is the same roots which manifest themselves in different countries. I would, therefore, urge you to understand the real significance of this problem, so that you may be able to deal with it properly.

### 31. Greetings to Spain and China<sup>1</sup>

I offer my greetings and the greetings of the Indian National Congress and the people of India to the British workers and other democrats and especially to the Spanish people.

India is far from Spain and is engrossed in her troubles of poverty and subjection but today we are fighting in India with considerable success with the conviction that we will soon win through. The best service that India can do to Spain or China is to struggle all the harder against fascism which is crushing her. But out of our poverty and weakness, we will also give what we can to stop subjection. If war is indivisible, if peace is indivisible, then I would say, freedom also is indivisible. Fascism is new to you but we have been experiencing it for the last 150 years, and so we know what Spain and China are going through. We support them because we admire their qualities of fighting—fighting day in and day out, and not compromising. We draw the lesson from their fight and we shall not compromise with British imperialism which stands for naked domination over India.

A part of the world inevitably reacts everywhere, which explains why, though you have a democracy, your government is becoming increasingly pro-fascist. When you protest against fascism do not forget the background of your government or the training that your leaders get in administering the subject nations of your empire.

1. Speech at Trafalgar Square, London, 17 July 1938. From *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 19 July 1938.

**32. India and the British Labour Party<sup>1</sup>**

Two and a half years ago I visited England and met many people here belonging to various parties and groups. They showed a courteous interest in the Indian problem and expressed sympathy for our cause. I appreciated the courtesy and welcomed the sympathy. And yet, inevitably, I attached no great importance to either, for I was fully conscious of the indifference and apathy to India of people generally and even of those whose business it is to consider such problems. I found a general desire not to think about India, to shirk the issue. It was too complicated and in a world full of troubles, why add to them? The Government of India Act had just been passed and, unsatisfactory as it was, it had one merit at least. It postponed the issue for a while and gave an excuse for not thinking about it.

I was not disappointed for I had not expected much more, and for many years we had trained ourselves in India not to rely on others but to develop our own strength. I went back to India. Our problem did not vanish because people in England were not thinking about it. It grew and we grew with it.

Meanwhile, the international situation became ever more critical and we came to realise that the Indian problem was a part of this world problem and that we in India could make a difference if crisis or war came. That realisation has grown with us and with others and has raised the Indian national struggle for independence to the international plane.

During my present visit to England I have again had the privilege of meeting many old friends and new and spoken about India to numerous gatherings. I found still a certain apathy and considerable ignorance, and inevitably the urgent problems of Spain and China and central Europe absorbed attention. And yet I found a vital difference and a new and more realistic way of looking at the Indian problem. Perhaps this was due to a realisation of the great strength of the Indian national movement today, perhaps to the gravity of the international situation and the apprehension that India might add to the danger of it when crisis came.

1. London, 18 July 1938. *The Tribune* (London), 28 October 1938. Reprinted in *China, Spain and the War*, (Allahabad, 1940), pp. 119-125.



Perhaps this very gravity, this sense of impending catastrophe, had forced people out of the old mental ruts and made them think afresh in terms of reality.

For the reality is this: that India wants and is determined to achieve full independence; that the problem of our appalling poverty clamours for solution and that this will not be solved till the people of India have power in their hands to shape their political and economic destiny as they will and without interference from outside; that the organised strength of the Indian people has grown greatly in recent years and it is difficult for outside authority to check for long their march to freedom; that the international situation indirectly helps greatly the Indian national movement. Even the Conservative die-hard has to acknowledge that this in essence is a true analysis of the Indian situation. India is bound to achieve her independence, preferably with the goodwill of others, but even if that goodwill is denied her. And so almost everybody today talks in terms of Indian independence.

Looked at in this perspective, the question of provincial autonomy and federation become minor issues in a larger context. They may, of course, provoke a major conflict, but the real question is, and will remain, independence, and every step we may take, every tactic we might adopt, will be considered and decided with reference to this question alone. Does it strengthen us and bring independence within our grasp?

If obstruction is offered, if attempts are made to impose anything on us, our reaction is bound to be hostile. The result ultimately will be the same for forces beyond human control are working to that end, but that result may be one brought about in friendliness and goodwill and leading to friendship and cooperation, or it may have a background of ill will and conflict darkening the future and creating barriers to healthy cooperation.

I believe it is an appreciation of all this that has brought about a welcome change in the outlook of many people here. They realise that in a dynamic situation mere passivity and indifference do not pay, while an active policy might well be advantageous.

England and India have an unfortunate background of hostility and conflict. It is not easy for an Indian to forget this, and yet in these pregnant days of world conflicts and fascist aggression and an ever-present possibility of terrible war, if we continue to think and function in the narrow terms of the past, we do so at our peril. We must rise above them and take the larger view.

I trust that it may be possible in the future for India and England to cooperate together as equals for the common good. But that cooperation is impossible under the shadow of empire. That empire will have

to be liquidated and India will have to gain her independence before real cooperation is possible.

As an Indian nationalist I have nothing to say to England, for we can only think of her in terms of imperialism. I can only work for building up and increasing our own strength and relying on it to gain our objective.

But as one who ardently desires a world order based on peace and freedom, I have much to say to England and to her people, for I see her present government pursuing a policy disastrous alike for both peace and freedom. That policy widens the gap between England and India, for we are entirely opposed to it and consider it one of the major evils of the present-day world. Can there be cooperation between us on this basis?

As a socialist I have even more to say to my comrades here. British Labour in the past has wobbled dangerously on imperial issues and more particularly on India. Its record is bad. But in these times of peril, none of us dare wobble or equivocate. And so it is time that the British Labour acted up to the principles it has enunciated, and, as it happens, even expediency demands such action.

Labour, which is anti-fascist, must also equally be anti-imperialist. It must stand for the ending of empire. It must clearly declare for the independence of India and for the right of the people there to frame their own constitution through a constituent assembly, and it must be prepared to do everything in its power to bring this about. We are not concerned overmuch with the federation, for we want the whole of the Government of India Act to go and to be replaced by a constitution of our own making.

The time has passed for minor remedies and the world rushes to catastrophe. We may yet avert this if the progressive forces of the world work together. India can play her part in this company, but only a free India can do so. British Labour working to this end will lay the foundations of future friendship and cooperation between the peoples of England and India.

It is gratifying to note that the leaders of British Labour are thinking on these lines. It is still more pleasing to find the rank and file of the labour movement responding enthusiastically to this call of freedom.

The world marches rapidly today and no one knows what tomorrow will bring. India also is changing and going ahead, and all our planning may be out of date soon. But a basis of goodwill between the progressive forces in India and England will lay the foundations for future cooperation for our mutual good and to the advantage of world peace and freedom.



33. To W. H. Gladstone Solomon<sup>1</sup>

London  
19th July, 1938

Dear Mr. Solomon,<sup>2</sup>

I am in receipt of your letter of July 14th<sup>3</sup> for which I thank you.

I entirely agree with you that everything should be done to preserve Indian art and to make it better known in foreign countries, more especially the great achievements of the distant past. I think also that replicas of the great monuments should be made as suggested by you.

I would personally welcome an exhibition of Indian art in London, provided, of course, that this is done properly and is a really first class exhibition. This should base itself on the ancient Indian achievements in sculpture and painting as well as her arts and crafts. Of course, all modern developments should be included. Obviously such an exhibition must be properly organised. Otherwise it will do little good.

It seems to me that the initiative for such an exhibition abroad has to come not from India, but from the country where the exhibition is going to be held. I understand that this has been the case in the past in regard to the Persian, Chinese, French, Italian and Dutch exhibitions in London. But I feel sure that if the initiative is taken elsewhere and it is shown that a proper exhibition is likely to result from it, every cooperation will be given in India. I cannot, of course, speak in this matter on behalf of the Congress without referring to it, but I have little doubt that the Congress organisation, as well as the Congress ministries, will welcome such an exhibition and give it such help and cooperation as they can.

Indian art has too long been treated as a thing for experts only and books on it are usually little understood by the public at large. It is highly desirable that a more effective and popular representation of it should be made.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. (b. 1880); a noted painter; curator, art section, Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay; director, Sir J.J. School of Art, Bombay; author of *The Charm of Indian Art*.

3. In his letter of 14 July 1938, he had stressed the need for the preservation of Indian art and suggested the holding of an Indian art exhibition in London.

### 34. India and the War Danger<sup>1</sup>

I have spent nearly a month in London and met a large number of friends belonging to all parties and groups. Today, the world situation, and the danger of war, fill everyone's mind and it is in this context that I have discussed the problem of India.

The changed circumstances have led people to consider the problems in the light of the new perspective. This has pushed minor issues into the background. Now, everybody realises that independence for India is bound to come. Everybody talks in these terms and the only question is one of finding ways and means.

It is also fully realised that today the Indian national movement is stronger than ever before and it is not possible to ignore it in any way.

A dominating factor in the situation is the danger of a crisis caused all over the world by an imminent war, and it is also clear that India can make a vital difference if such a crisis occurs.

It is also becoming increasingly clear that India which is not perfectly free will not permit herself to be exploited for purposes of war, while a free India will judge this question all by herself.

Therefore, questions like federation and the rest become minor issues before this major one which must decide the political future of India. More and more people now feel that the only way out is for the Indian people to decide about their constitution through a constituent assembly. Ultimately, of course, everything depends on the strength of the Indian people.

I have had the greatest courtesy and friendliness shown to me by people of varying shades of opinion whom I have met here, and I am grateful to them for this.

1. Talk with the correspondent of *The Hindustan Times*, London, 20 July 1938.  
From *The Hindustan Times*, 21 July 1938.



### 35. To Carl Heath<sup>1</sup>

London  
21st July, 1938

Dear Mr. Heath,

I have your letter of the 16th.<sup>2</sup> I should like to write to you at greater length later, but I am leaving London for Paris today.

I might mention, however, that what you have written, though correct in so far as it goes, is not the basis of a real understanding, it is only a step to avoid conflict and pave the way to a future understanding.

Even so the statement that India will ultimately have the right to decide for herself does not go far enough. We cannot think in terms of long periods, but only in terms of the near future.

I am quite sure that the right approach is to proceed on the basis of that self-determination now. The machinery may take a little time, but the principle must be explicit and steps taken to give effect to it.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. Carl Heath referring to their recent meeting in London proposed "a working agreement between India and Britain for achieving freedom for India."

### 36. India and the World Crisis<sup>1</sup>

I have had the privilege of meeting a large number of persons belonging to all parties and viewpoints in England during the past months. I have discussed Indian problems and international problems with them, and I must say that I have found a new appreciation of the Indian problem among widely divergent groups. There is not the same complacency as there used to be.

1. Statement to the *Manchester Guardian*, London, 21 July 1938. *Manchester Guardian*, 22 July 1938.

This has, no doubt, come from a realisation of the strength of the nationalist movement and the powerful and widespread urge for independence, as well as from the apprehension as to India's part in a great world crisis which always seems to be impending. India obviously can play a part in such a crisis which might make a difference and thus the Indian problem becomes a part of the world problem and cannot be separated from it. In regard to world affairs, Indian opinion is entirely anti-fascist, and there is complete disapproval of the British Government's foreign policy, which is considered pro-fascist and pro-Franco. This has become an additional barrier between India and the British Government and has intensified our desire to have full control of our foreign policy, which can only come through independence.

But anti-fascist as India is, it is also fundamentally and inevitably anti-imperialist; it is because she is anti-imperialist that she is anti-fascist. In any crisis she will first of all consider her policy from the point of view of anti-imperialism which is of her own freedom from imperialist domination. A subject country cannot help its dominating imperialism even in order to combat the fascism it dislikes. That is the crux of the problem, and the Congress has stated it in the clearest language.

India must decide for herself what attitude she will take in a world crisis, and only a free India can so decide. A subject India has no alternative but to oppose and resist any attempt to impose any decision on her.

Problems of federation and the like have to be viewed in this larger perspective, and if so viewed they become relatively minor matters. As a matter of tactics we may act in a particular way, but this action will always be taken in a spirit of hostility and with a desire to strengthen ourselves, unless the imposition of anything on us is entirely removed. Such a removal will change the whole situation and produce a new psychological atmosphere, devoid of the sense of conflict. This can come only if the British Government decides and declares that the constitution of India should be framed by the Indian people themselves and they should have full freedom to do so.

How to give effect to this declaration must immediately be considered and some steps taken to that end. The only democratic way is through a constituent assembly, as the Congress has demanded. With this background the present position can be considered, and I am sure it will be possible for a friendly arrangement about procedure to be arrived at. It is important, however, that there should be no delay in order to create this right background and to prevent crisis from overtaking us.

The Congress obviously cannot make any additional move. It has stated its position quite clearly. It is for the British Government to



move in the matter. If it goes on repeating that the framework of the Government of India Act must stand, then the gap is completely unbridgeable. What has to be said is the very reverse of this—that the Government of India Act is a temporary expedient and will have to be scrapped to give place to a constitution as drafted by the Indian people. There is no other way out. Not to adopt it is to proceed, as we have done for so long in the past, in a hostile way and think always in terms of a crisis that approaches, and prepare for it.

We may adapt ourselves to a particular development if we think we gain strength thereby. But our eyes will be fixed elsewhere, and we will endeavour to take advantage of every opportunity which takes us to our goal. The time has gone by for leisurely steps. One does not proceed in this way over a yawning chasm. The only way is to jump it.

I am most grateful for the courtesy and friendliness which I have met with from all people in England.

### 37. The Bombing of Open Towns<sup>1</sup>

I have to convey to this great gathering the greetings and the assurances of full support in the cause of peace of the Indian National Congress representing the people of India. I do not speak on behalf of kings and queens or princes, but I do claim to speak for hundreds of millions of my countrymen. We have associated ourselves with this work of peace most willingly because of the vital urgency of this problem. Also because, in any event, our past background, and our civilisation, would have urged us to do so. For the spirit of India for long ages past, like that of our great sister nation China, has been a spirit of peace. Even in our national struggle for independence we have always kept this ideal before us and adopted peaceful methods. So we gladly pledge ourselves to labour for peace.

Lord Cecil remarked yesterday that the only way ultimately to have peace is to abolish war. We entirely agree with this statement. To abolish war we have to remove the causes and roots of war. Because

1. Speech at the International Peace Conference, Paris, 24 July 1938. *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 3 August 1938. Reprinted in *The Unity of India*, (London, 1941), pp. 278-283.

we have dealt with the problem superficially in the past, and not touched its roots, we have failed so far to achieve anything worthwhile, and the international situation has progressively deteriorated and brought death and untold suffering to millions. We shall fail again and perhaps perish in that failure if we continue to ignore those roots of war.

We see fascist aggression today driving the world to war and we rightly condemn and seek to combat it. But though fascism is a recent growth in the West, we have long known it under a different name—imperialism. For generations past colonial countries have suffered under imperialism and suffer still. It is this imperial idea, functioning as imperialism or fascism, that is a potent cause of war and until this goes there can be no true or enduring peace. There is no peace for a subject country at any time, for peace only comes with freedom. And so empires must go; they have had their day. We are not interested in emperors or kings, but in the peoples of the world, and the Indian National Congress stands for the people of India and their independence. Even today India is a powerful factor in favour of peace, and she can make a difference if a world crisis arises. She cannot be and does not propose to be ignored in this matter. A free India will be a tower of strength for peace, and soon we hope that India will be free.

Lord Cecil has pointed out the dangers of an intensive nationalism. May I say that I entirely agree with him, and, though I stand for Indian nationalism and Indian independence, I do so on a basis of true internationalism? We in India will gladly cooperate in a world order and even agree to give up a measure of national sovereignty, in common with others, in favour of a system of collective security. But that can come only when nations associate on a basis of peace and freedom.

There can be no world security founded on the subjection of colonial countries or on the continuance of imperialism. Freedom, like peace and war, is today indivisible. If the aggressors of today have to be checked, the aggressors of yesterday have also to be called to account. Because we have sought to cover up past evil, though it still persists, we have been powerless to check the new evil of today.

Evil unchecked grows, evil tolerated poisons the whole system. And because we have tolerated our past and present evils, international affairs are poisoned and law and justice have disappeared from them.

We have met here especially to discuss the aerial bombardment of open towns and civilian population. Horror has piled on horror from day to day and though the present is terrible to contemplate, the future seems to hold something that might be incredibly worse. Recently I visited Barcelona and saw with my own eyes its ruined buildings, its gaping chasms and the bombs hurled through the air, bringing death



and destruction in their train. That picture is imprinted in my heart and each day's news of bombing in Spain or China stabs me and makes me sick with the horror of it. And yet over that picture there is another, that of the magnificent people of Spain who have endured and fought against these horrors for two long years with unexampled heroism, and written with their own blood and suffering a history that will inspire ages to come. To these great men and women of Republican Spain I offer on behalf of the Indian people our respectful homage. And to the people of China, also, knit to us by a thousand bonds since the dawn of history, we stretch out our hands in comradeship. Their perils are ours, their suffering hurts us, and we shall hold together whatever good or ill fortune may befall us.

We are deeply moved by these aerial bombardments in Spain and China. And yet aerial bombing is no new thing for us. The evil is an old one, and because it went unchecked it has grown to those vast and terrible dimensions. Have you forgotten the bombing on the north west frontier of India which has been going on now for many long years and still continues?<sup>2</sup> There are no great cities like Madrid or Barcelona or Canton or Hankow, but the villages of the Indian frontier also shelter human beings, men, women and children, and they also die and are maimed when bombs from the air fall on them. Do you remember that this question of aerial bombing was raised many years ago in the League of Nations, and the British Government refused to stop it on the frontier? This was called police action, and they insisted on its maintenance. The evil went unchecked, and if it has grown now is it surprising? On whom lies the responsibility?

The Prime Minister of Great Britain has recently offered to withdraw his reservation if there is general agreement in regard to the stoppage of aerial bombing. But that offer is an empty one, unless he takes action and stops all bombing on the frontier. Till then his protests against other people's bombing have little meaning and less value.

The Bishop of Chichester<sup>3</sup> demanded yesterday at this conference that no treaty should be made with countries that were carrying on aerial bombing, a sentiment that was rightly applauded. What of England then, which is still responsible for bombing on the frontier of India? Is it because the British Government cannot approach this question with clean hands, that they have developed an incredible foreign policy

2. See *Selected Works*, Vol. 8, pp. 457-462.

3. George Bell (1883-1963); dean of Canterbury, 1924-29; bishop of Chichester, 1929-58; chairman, central committee of world council of churches, 1948-54.

and now seek friendship and agreement with a power that is most responsible for this bombing in Spain? I wish to dissociate India completely from this policy of encouraging the evil-doer and aggressor and to say that the people of India will be no party to it and will resist it whenever they have a chance to do so.

We have seen the tragic farce of non-intervention in Spain, which, under the cover of fair words and democratic procedure, has aided the insurgents and the invaders of Spain and prevented the people of the country from obtaining even the means of defence. The seas and a hundred doors are open for supplies to reach the insurgents, but the Pyrenees frontier is closed in the name of non-intervention, though women and children die through bombing or are starved from lack of food.

We blame and condemn the invaders and aggressors in Spain, but they have at least openly defied all canons of international law and decency and challenged the world to stop them. What of those governments who, while bravely talking of peace and law, have submitted to this challenge, adapted themselves to each fresh act of aggression, and tried to make friends with the evil-doers? What of those who have criminally stood by and shown indifference when life, and what was more sacred than life itself, was crushed and dishonoured?

Even today the aggressor nations are far weaker in numbers and strength and resources than the other countries. And yet the latter appear helpless and incapable of taking effective action. Is it not so because their hands and feet are tied by their past and present imperialist policies? These governments have failed; it is time that the people took action and compelled them to mend their ways. This action must be immediately to stop aerial bombardments, to open the Pyrenees frontier, to permit the means of defence and food to reach Republican Spain. If bombing is to continue, anti-aircraft guns and other apparatus meant for defence must be allowed to go through.

What vast destruction there has been during these last two years in Spain and China! The starving and the wounded, the women and the children cry aloud piteously for help, and it is the business of all decent and sensitive people all over the world to help. This is a world problem, and we must organise on a world basis. The real burden of the struggle has fallen on the people of the stricken countries; let us at least carry this small burden.

I am glad to tell this conference that the Indian National Congress has organised and is soon sending a medical unit to China. We have also met with considerable success in India in our boycott of Japanese goods as the export figures demonstrate. A recent incident will indicate



the strength of our feeling for the Chinese people. In Malaya the Japanese owned iron and tin mines which employed Chinese workers. These workers refused to help in producing munitions for Japan and left the mines. Thereupon Indian workers were engaged, but at our request they also refused to work there, although this meant privation and suffering for them.

And so the struggle goes on. How many of our friends and colleagues and dear ones have died in this struggle already, and not died in vain? How many of us who are gathered here may go the same way and not meet again? But whether we live or die, the cause of peace and freedom will remain, for that is greater than us—it is the cause of humanity itself. If that perishes then all of us perish. If it lives, we live also, whatever fate may befall us. To that cause then let us pledge ourselves.

### 38. To J. B. Kripalani<sup>1</sup>

Paris  
27.7.38

My dear Jivat,

I wrote<sup>2</sup> to you this morning—I want to add a few lines to give you some idea of the position in regard to India here. In a sense my visit has done good as it has kept India in the forefront. So far as meetings, etc., go I have had unusual success and great crowds have come which is extraordinary for meetings to be addressed by Indians—Bapu apart. At international gatherings I have pegged away at the Indian question and at imperialism. But the really interesting part of my visit has been the numerous private conversations I have had with all manner of individuals. I found a very marked difference in outlook among Englishmen of all parties. Partly this is due to the consciousness of our growing strength but largely owing to the international situation. Even diehard Conservatives talk seriously about the independence of India and discuss how a constituent assembly can be summoned. There is a spirit of resignation to an inevitable happening. Of course this happening can be delayed but the cost of this is recognised to be great and possibly very harmful. All this sounds rather curious when put side by side

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-71/1938, p. 11, N.M.M.L.

2. Not available.

with suggestions made by Satyamurti and others.<sup>3</sup> The Working Committee members, I suppose, are worried over Jinnah's intransigence and over difficulties in C.P.<sup>4</sup> and elsewhere. Quite rightly. So would I be if I was there. And yet from a distance all this does not seem quite so big as it appears at home. It would have been natural and usual for people in England to question me and try to tackle me on all such matters, especially the Hindu-Muslim tension. This has always been the case previously. And yet surprisingly this did not happen to any marked extent. Would you believe it that in the course of two hours' very frank and friendly conversation there was no mention of Hindu-Muslim affairs or even of federation, so far as I remember?<sup>5</sup> Our conversation covered a wide range of subjects and covered many aspects of the Indian problem. We talked of independence and the constituent assembly and economic questions and the present international situation. There was no obvious attempt to shirk any issue or to talk superficially, as was the case with Zetland. This will indicate to you what the basis of my talks has been. I have chosen the ground for them and dealt with our problems fundamentally in view of the grave crisis that approaches. This does not mean that the British Government is going to take away or to surrender to our demands. This kind of thing does not easily happen. Indeed Linlithgow, as we parted, said that a wide gap separated us and we would look at each other across it. Still this does mean that the position has eventually changed and if we do not appreciate it, it is our fault and we shall suffer for it. We are in an enormously strong position. Indeed we would have been in an overwhelming position but for our internal difficulties.

I must stop now. Perhaps you could convey the contents of the letter to Bapu.

Yours affly.,  
Jawahar

3. Satyamurti said on 9 July 1938 that if the British Government fulfilled certain conditions, he would recommend to the Congress the acceptance of federation as a transitional solution.
4. N.B. Khare, the Premier of C.P., resigned on 20 July 1938, following differences with some of his colleagues, and reformed the ministry on the advice of the Governor. As this action was criticised by the Congress Working Committee, he resigned again on 23 July 1938 on the ground that he had "committed an error of judgement."
5. Jawaharlal met Linlithgow in London on 19 July 1938.



### 39. Spain, China and India<sup>1</sup>

The fascist planes select at random the militarily less valuable targets, making it really impossible to explain by military reasons their merciless killings of the defenceless citizens in open cities. During my stay in Spain, I was caught twice in the whirlwind of air raids and so I can say from my personal experience that these barbarian brutalities are not so greatly effective as the interveners would like them to be.

The high spirit of the republican territory is remarkable. The people calmly face these hard ordeals, and the war methods of the interveners only increase the determination and endurance of the civil population and the people's army. The situation on the front is not at all so unfavourable as is reported by the press patronizing Franco. I also visited the international brigades in which my compatriots are fighting too. The biggest problems are the provisions and war materials. In this respect we must render help to the republican government. Otherwise Franco is far, very far from victory.

In Barcelona and Madrid, I conveyed the unanimous greetings of the Indian people to the Spanish people who are on the republican side.

All Asians are aware that the heavenly empire is fighting for their common aim. The Indian sympathies for China are very understandable, as China is nearest to us and our relations with her are thousands of years old. India helps the Chinese struggle with all means available at hand. One of the most effective means of help has been the boycott of Japanese goods. It was the biggest success in India.

India, the most valuable part of the British Empire and its might, the most important source of its strength, is causing more and more worries to London. All of us still remember last year's elections, in which the national movement achieved gigantic victories. The Indian National Congress is mobilising masses in increasingly bigger proportions in support of demands for the revision of the constitution, for changes in the powers of the Viceroy, which would be a decisive step towards independence of India.

Above all, we are endeavouring to achieve independence. In the National Congress are united the national revolutionaries, the socialists

1. Interview to *Rude Pravo* in Paris printed on 31 July 1938. J.N. Papers, N.M.M.L.

and the communists, in a formation similar to national fronts, and it represents all the forces in the country. The political consciousness of our people is growing. The influence of Gandhi is still great even if it is more moral than political in nature. We see political questions in a substantially different way from Gandhi, but our relations are good and moreover it is our foremost duty to maintain and strengthen our cooperation against England. We are well organised and we are not afraid of undertaking strikes and tax boycotts. Besides, the most important internal problem is the solution of the agrarian question.

The Soviet agrarian policy has secured great sympathy for the Soviet Union in India. I need not even add that Great Britain fights with all its means against the establishment of contacts between India and Moscow. The establishment of direct personal contacts is next to impossible. The relevant literature comes to us only in English from the English democratic sources. We highly appreciate the foreign policy of Moscow and the support rendered by it to the oppressed peoples.

In India there are no fascists. Among the hundreds of millions of Indians there is hardly a person who would sympathise with the parties of the totalitarian powers. We are very well aware of what Berlin, Rome and Tokyo want but we shall never allow the forces of our national anti-imperialist movement to be harnessed to their carriage. We shall never join such powers—not even if they would be ready to support us—because their aims are directed against democracy; they want to drown the world in blood. We do not wish to exchange the present oppression with a bigger one, still more reckless one. We want to carry on consistently an anti-fascist policy.

If there is an international conflict our attitude will depend on the attitude which England adopts towards us. We have been demanding changes in the constitution. If London agrees to our demands, we shall help them. If they reject our justified demands and our righteous claims, we shall hardly be able to support them.

#### 40. To J. B. Kripalani<sup>1</sup>

Houlgate (France)  
1.8.38

My dear Jivat,

I enclose a long note<sup>2</sup> for the Working Committee members. I am sending copies of this note to Bapu and to Subhas—and to no others.

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-71/1938, p. 5, N.M.M.L.

2. See the succeeding item.



It is going to cost me a devil of a lot of money to send all this by air mail. Will you take such steps as you consider proper to communicate this note to the Working Committee members? Care should be taken to keep it absolutely confidential.

It has been an awful job to type this long note. But I did not want to entrust it to anyone else.

I get little news about India. The C.P. news was expected though not in the way it came about. The Burma riots are bad.<sup>3</sup>

I have no idea how my friend Jinnah is functioning.

Love,

Yours,  
Jawahar

3. There had been riots in Burma following the publication of an article by an Indian mullah and it was reported that the Indian community suffered considerable loss of life and property.

#### 41. Note to the Working Committee<sup>1</sup>

I must apologise to the members of the Working Committee for my not keeping them informed of what I have been doing since my arrival in Europe six weeks ago. I sent a note at the conclusion of my voyage.<sup>2</sup> Since then my time has been so fully taken up by engagements that it was not possible for me to write in detail. Even brief letters have been difficult to write. I felt somewhat worn out in London and under doctors' advice took some injections and ultra-violet ray treatment as a tonic. I have now come to a French seaside place for a week to take some rest and to clear off arrears of correspondence and do other important work which has had to wait all this time.

My first few days in Europe were spent in Barcelona, Spain, and there was much that I saw there which was of exceeding interest. I wanted, and still want, to write about this visit in some detail to the Working Committee, but I must postpone this to some future occasion.

1. Written at Houlgate (France), 1 August 1938. J.N. Papers, N.M.M.L.

2. See pp. 8-17.

Then I spent three days in Paris, where I went again for six days after my London visit. During both these visits I met many important and interesting persons, attended conferences and meetings, and had an intimate glimpse into the whirlpool that is Europe and international politics today. Of this I should like to write later if I can find the time.

The rest of my time — full four weeks — I spent in London or the neighbourhood. There was the Indian question dominant, so far as I was concerned, and international affairs, and the connection of the two. I propose to deal in this note chiefly with the Indian question, leaving other matters for a future occasion.

I might mention that my visit to Europe has attracted considerable attention, and a particular importance has been attached to it, not only in England but also in other countries of Europe. Even in Berlin, I was told that great importance was attached to my visit. I have had repeated invitations from the German authorities, unofficially conveyed but almost official in their character, pressing me to visit Germany and see things for myself. In view of the present state of Europe and international affairs I have not thought it advisable to visit Germany. I was told that some high German officials were so keen on seeing me and discussing various matters with me, that they were prepared to travel to any part of Germany to do so. As a matter of fact I am going to pass through Munich early next month and I propose to spend two days there. I have sent word that if anyone wants to see me, he can do so then at Munich.

In England I had made it clear that I was prepared to see anybody but I was not keen on seeing any officials and would not take the initiative in the matter. If however I was approached by any such person I would gladly meet him. This, I need hardly add, had nothing to do with questions of personal prestige. It has been unusual for us to visit officials in the past and I did not wish to encourage the idea, which has long been prevalent, that Indians are terribly keen on meeting cabinet ministers in order to plead their cause. On the last occasion when I visited England, two and a half years ago, I took up a stronger attitude and would not agree to meet a member of the British Government even though he might want to meet me. But conditions in India have changed and I felt that such an attitude would be absurd and improper. So I relaxed but only slightly. On my receiving personal invitations from the parties concerned I willingly consented to meet them.

I met a host of people of all shades and views. Excepting the Prime Minister, I met almost everybody who counts or might count in regard to India. Another exception is Winston Churchill, whom I did not meet. I had long and friendly talks with all of them. Some I met in



country houses during week-end visits and had repeated opportunities of talking to them. These talks covered a wide variety of subjects—our domestic subjects of course like federation and provincial autonomy, Indian defence forces (which I discussed with a very high military officer with intimate knowledge of Indian and world conditions), and international affairs in relation to India. I met some people from the British dominions also and was interested in their reactions to the Indian demand for independence.

It is impossible for me to reproduce these talks, nor is it perhaps desirable to do so in this note. I propose to give general impressions only. The numerous public and semi-public gatherings I attended, I propose to ignore in this note, as they have been partly reported. I would say this, however, that many of these gatherings were remarkable and quite unusual for an Indian to address.

The dominant impression that one gathers is that the whole question of India is looked upon from the point of view of what India might do at a time of grave international crisis, such as war or the like. The fact that India, or to be more exact the national movement or the Congress, can make a considerable difference during such a crisis is everywhere recognised. Crudely put, India had a tremendous nuisance value. Because of this, India cannot be ignored and everything should be done to settle this question, or prevent a conflict at least, before the great crisis comes. (In France, it is the opinion of leading politicians that England has, in late years, been so deplorably weak in international affairs because of the fear of losing India in the event of crisis.)

It was significant that in my talks with British politicians the Hindu-Muslim question was only briefly referred to. In view of recent happenings it might have been justifiable to lay stress on this, as in the past. But when major questions are discussed, minor ones sink into insignificance and it was obvious that no vital importance was attached here to the communal problem. Of course this does not mean that this will not be played up and exploited for all it is worth. But it has ceased to occupy the centre of the stage in serious politics. I think this background might be kept in view when considering this question in India. Those who had read the Jinnah correspondence invariably reacted against him.

The federation was frequently discussed but this also more in the larger context of the future of India. This attempt to understand and deal with the Indian problem fundamentally was much more obvious than at any previous time. The world situation was no doubt responsible for this, also the feeling that the Indian national movement had grown too big and strong to be suppressed. These two reasons taken

together made it imperative to British statesmen that a true solution should be found which might lead to friendly relations between England and India. And yet when this solution seemed to lead to the elimination of empire from India, there was inevitably a strong reaction against it. The problem seemed insoluble for the moment—a gap that could not be bridged. Yet a full realisation of the problem itself and a desire, no doubt for selfish reasons, to solve it somehow were obvious indications of the great change that had come over British opinion. So far as leftist circles were concerned, they were prepared to go almost to the full extent of meeting India's demands for independence and a constituent assembly. The right elements, those in power today, were not so prepared but felt very uncomfortable about it.

The talk I had with Lord Linlithgow was long, frank and friendly. We discussed many subjects—international affairs, British foreign policy, Spain, communism (that is, the economic policy underlying it), Russia, America, Japan, Spain, the land question in India, cooperative farming, the reclamation of alkaline soils by utilizing molasses, industrial development in India, the effect of adult suffrage on a people, the pushing on of social services, etc. We talked of provincial autonomy as it had worked and the inherent difficulties underlying it. We hardly touched upon the Hindu-Muslim problem or on federation. And then we discussed the future of India and her relations with the British. Linlithgow put me the straight question if we would agree to a status like that of the British dominions. My answer to this question was not a brief one.

I said that in spite of the background of hostility which had inevitably developed between India and England owing to their abnormal relations and the recent events, we had every desire to maintain friendly contacts to our mutual advantage. We recognised further that the dominion conception was a dynamic and changing one and gave a large measure of independence. At the same time it was essential that we should start with a clean slate and have perfect freedom to decide about our future. Psychologically this was very important as otherwise there would be some imposition and the feeling of hostility would continue and poison our relations, as it had done in the case of Ireland. But there were other practical reasons also in favour of independence. For us political independence meant little unless we had the fullest economic independence and the power to shape our economic structure independently of the City of London. Our real problems were economic and we could only solve them by very radical economic reforms and changes. Dominion Status meant in theory economic freedom but not so in practice, and especially in the case of India with her long past





AT VICTORIA STATION, LONDON, 23 JUNE 1938



WITH LEADERS OF THE BRITISH LABOUR PARTY, JULY 1938

L TO R : JAWAHARLAL NEHRU, C.R. ATTLEE, UNKNOWN, R.H.S. CROSSMAN,  
A. BEVAN, HAROLD LASKI AND STAFFORD CRIPPS



record of economic bondage to Britain, this practice would certainly continue. If Dominion Status was offered to us in reality, our reaction would depend on many circumstances. We would certainly not look upon it as a satisfactory solution or as ending the dispute between England and India. The urge to independence was too widespread and deep-seated. It may be that in the totality of circumstances we might consider it a step which strengthened us and thus enabled us to reach our ultimate objective, and in this light worked it. But always the desire to go further ahead would be present and the psychological feeling of conflict would continue.

Then again why should we think in terms of a narrow grouping of nations? Why not consider this on a world-wide basis? One group of nations facing a hostile group would lead to conflicts on a wider and more tremendous scale between the rival groups. The time had come when we should build on this wider basis and not confine ourselves to the so-called British Commonwealth. The very name of this implied racialism which excluded us. Why should India not have the closest relations with China which was drawing very close to us? Or any other country?

I pointed out that the present foreign policy of Britain was repugnant to us and we were entirely opposed to it. We could not have co-operation in foreign affairs on this basis.

Although we demanded independence, we did not think of this in terms of isolation or a narrow nationalism. We were looking forward to a world order and we were perfectly prepared to have the closest relations with Britain provided these were based on perfect freedom and equality. The way to achieve this result was for England to realise and declare that the people of India were absolutely free to shape their destiny and frame their constitution, and the only democratic way was by means of a constituent assembly, as demanded by the Congress. If this was fully admitted and a willingness shown to take immediate steps to that end, a new atmosphere would be created, a friendly one, between India and England, and cooperation would become easy. We could agree without difficulty about the steps to be taken to reach the objective, and our future contacts and relations would be viewed in this light.

As an Indian nationalist I could only think in terms of increasing the strength of our people. That was the only guarantee of our progress and freedom. But as one vastly interested in world peace and cooperation, and in the establishment of friendly relations between India and England, and further in view of the great world crisis that threatened us, I urged that British statesmen should be wise and far-seeing enough



to take the only step in regard to India which would bring a real solution in its train.

Lord Linlithgow seemed rather oppressed at the difficulty and complexity of the problem. He said that even if he agreed with me that the Government of India Act had to be scrapped and a constituent assembly summoned, what could he do except to resign and lead a small band of people in England advocating this. He could not get the British Government to agree to it. I pointed out that the realities of the situation demanded far-reaching action and, so far as I could make out, most British men of affairs were trying to face these realities. There was no other way out. Not to take it was to add to the difficulties and make a friendly settlement further off than ever. And then there was the danger of world crisis.

So we talked of many matters. As I was leaving, Lord Linlithgow said that a wide gap separated us and we would look at each other across it.

I have given a longer report of my conversation with Linlithgow than I intended, both because of its intrinsic importance and because it indicates the official and restrained reaction to what I said. The reaction of others, who were non-officials, both Conservatives and Liberals, was more favourable to India. As for the Labourites and leftists generally, they went much further still. They accepted my contentions almost in their entirety and were convinced that India had the whip hand if only we would use it. They were interested in India for selfish reasons also, as they hoped that pressure from India might influence British foreign policy, which they detested, and help in changing it.

Early during my stay I had long talks with the Labour leaders. I put it to them that I was not out to bargain with them or to promote an alliance between the Congress and the British Labour Party. The Labour Party's record in India had been bad and they were very unpopular in India. The Congress relied on its own strength and would endeavour to increase it and to take advantage of every opportunity to go ahead. Still as a socialist and one believing in international co-operation, I would greatly welcome some kind of informal cooperation between the Indian people and the politically advanced elements in England. If the Labour Party was true to its creed and was prepared to act up to it, there was such a basis of cooperation. That creed was anti-imperialism.

Further it was clear that the Labour Party had no power in the government today and was not likely to have it in the near future. By the time Labour came to power in Britain, the situation might have completely changed and we would have changed with it. So we could not



say what would happen or what we might do two years or so hence. But still if the Labour Party, of its own motion and without any question of an agreement with us, made a move in the right direction, we would certainly welcome it. Such a move, even though it did not bring any definite results now, might prove helpful.

I had long conversations with some of the Labour leaders and they produced a document embodying their suggestions. This was based, of course, on a Labour government coming into power, but it was suggested that the broad principles of it might be adopted at the next annual Labour Party conference. It was considered that some such step should be taken at a fairly early stage, and certainly long before the general election. Sprung at the last moment before an election it would have unfortunate results as there would be no mass backing for it.

The basis of these proposals was that India should be given the fullest opportunity for self-determination by means of a constituent assembly. Also that this should be done as rapidly as possible by executive action without previous sanction of Parliament. To refer to Parliament would delay matters and introduce complications. Constitutional lawyers of high repute considered that this could be done. Further to expedite matters, as far as possible the existing electoral machinery should be taken advantage of, subject to adult suffrage being introduced. Also to avoid communal difficulties, existing arrangements and divisions, *mutatis mutandis*, to continue for the purposes of the constituent assembly.

The matter was to be referred to Parliament only when the constituent assembly had framed its constitution and its representatives had met the representatives of the British Government and framed a treaty. Of course, it would be open to Parliament to interfere by a vote of no-confidence or otherwise at any stage.

The Government of India Act need not be repealed as such. This repeal would be consequential on a treaty of secession. This treaty would be subsequently ratified by the new parliament in India as well as the British Parliament. There is no exact precedent for such a procedure which involves the treaty-making power of the crown. There is the Irish parallel which is somewhat different.<sup>3</sup> A nearer case was that of Heligoland.<sup>4</sup>

3. The Government of Ireland Act of 1920 provided for separate parliaments for Ulster and the south. In 1937, an independent Eire was established under De Valera's leadership.

4. Heligoland island, at the mouth of the river Elbe, was ceded by Britain to Germany in 1890.

My original talks took place with Attlee (the leader of the opposition), Sir Stafford Cripps, Prof. Laski, Leonard Barnes<sup>5</sup> (an authority on colonial questions) and some others among whom was a judge of the Australian Supreme Court. The heads of proposals framed then were as follows:<sup>6</sup>

I said that these proposals could form the basis of discussion and, generally speaking, the Congress would probably agree, though I could not commit it to every item. It will be noticed that an indirect system of election for the constituent assembly is proposed. This seems inevitable in order to restrict its members to reasonable limits.

Further, I made it clear that we wanted no amendment of the Government of India Act. We wanted it scrapped altogether. We would prefer to carry on with the existing structure till the constituent assembly met and decided, and to do without the wrong type of federation. But in any event both the provincial governments and the Government of India must function differently and in the spirit of the changes to come.

The Indian states offered some difficulties. It has been suggested that the door should be left open for them to enter the constituent assembly on the same conditions as the provinces, but no compulsion should be exercised. We should rely on the compulsion of events which is bound to be considerable, and, in any event, a large number of them would join, if the British Government's attitude was clear and they could get no help from it. Still the difficulty remained: what of those which did not join? It has been suggested in the above proposals that the British Government should denounce (legally and constitutionally, of course) their treaties with the princes. I pointed out that such a course at an early stage might give rise to difficulties and should be avoided. The legal position might then be one of independence for the state and this might enable it to intrigue against us and obstruct our work in many ways. So I suggested that no reference to this might be made till the actual time came to consider this matter. Much will have

5. (b. 1896); served in the British colonial office, 1921-25, and in South Africa, 1933; taught in the department of social and administrative studies, Oxford University till 1962; Labour Party expert on colonial affairs.

6. Not given in the text available. The major heads however were: a constituent assembly elected on universal suffrage with acceptance of existing communal constituencies and other similar basis of representation to decide the future constitution; only those princely states which accepted these forms of elections could send elected representatives to the assembly; Britain to announce that all treaties with princes would lapse as soon as the constitution had been passed; and a treaty between India and Britain, announcing the abdication of the British power in India; and India would take over that part of the debt represented by assets within India, after independent valuation.



happened by then and I felt sure that the creation of the constituent assembly would give rise to such a power in India that no one would be able to withstand it.

The question of the princes and the Indian states requires more research work in the constitutional and historical domains. It seems that the position they have taken up recently has no justification in law. There are no two crowns in India. In the League of Nations India is one. It was proposed therefore that this question might be further looked into both in England and India.

In regard to the public debt, the Congress position is accepted that, in case of disagreement, there should be an impartial tribunal. An interesting suggestion is made regarding that part of the debt (not covered by assets) which might ultimately be allotted to us. It is proposed that we pay this not in cash but in purchase of British goods. That is to say that in paying the debt we get our money's worth in machinery or other goods. We are thus not making a one-sided payment at all but getting something in exchange for it. Ordinarily speaking, this is an undesirable undertaking as it must affect adversely the home manufactures. But if the debt has to be paid, surely it is better to get something in exchange. Probably our developing industries will require plenty of heavy goods and machinery and we shall, in any event, have to import them. Importance was attached by the Labour leaders to this arrangement as they thought this would make it easier for them to approach the British public. Of course, it may be that the tribunal decides that there is nothing due from us. In that event no question arises of any such arrangement.

I pointed out that in the event of a peaceful, speedy and friendly transition to independence, India would not be unwilling to assume some burdens in the shape of pensions and other charges. The cost of conflict would be greater than these. But we could only consider these questions after the main question was decided.

Further I pointed out that I could not formally commit the Congress to anything and it was desirable that the Labour Party should go ahead of its own accord. Then again, I repeated, all this was very much in the air and no one knew what the next year or two might bring.

These proposals were subsequently discussed at an informal meeting of the Labour executive, among them present being Attlee, Dalton,<sup>7</sup>

7. Hugh Dalton (1887-1962); a Labour politician and contemporary of Jawaharlal at Cambridge; Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs, 1929-31; Member of Economic Warfare, 1940-42; President, Board of Trade, 1942-47; Chancellor of the Exchequer, 1945-47; Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, 1948-50; Minister of Town and Country Planning, 1950-51; Minister of Local Government and Planning, 1951.

Stafford Cripps, Morrison,<sup>8</sup> David Grenfell,<sup>9</sup> Laski, and Morgan.<sup>10</sup> There was some criticism and discussion but in principle all agreed that this was the only line of approach. As persons who always thought in terms of elections, they considered them from the electoral point of view. The general view was that the main principles should be affirmed by the Labour Party but the detailed steps to be taken (which indeed could not be taken now so far as the Labour Party was concerned) should be held over and considered. Meanwhile some research work should be done about the constitutional and other aspects.

I might mention that the attitude of these Labour leaders was very different this time from what it was two and a half years ago. These leaders, it must be remembered, include all the moderate and most cautious of the Labour group.

I do not think that all this will lead to anything very practical on these lines as the situation is a changing one. Nevertheless it might prove helpful in many ways. I should like to know the reactions of the Working Committee to this line of approach.<sup>11</sup> I shall meet the Labour leaders again before I return to India and I want to tell them then, informally of course, what the Congress attitude is.

The question of defence was also discussed with the Labour leaders but this was not incorporated in the heads of proposals referred to above. The principles suggested were:

1. British army to disappear.
2. The present Indian army to be taken over by the new Indian government and democratized.
3. Militia to be built up.

The first step should be a declaration of the type and policy to be pursued. Then a technical committee should be appointed to report as to how this could be done.

The present system in India is neither efficient nor suited for our purpose. Under it we require 27 years at least to Indianise the army and even then the army will not be of the right type. Thus there is no question of Indianisation as such now.

8. Herbert Morrison (1888-1965); a Labour politician; Minister of Transport, 1929-31; Minister of Supply, 1940; Home Secretary, 1940-45; Lord President, 1945-51; Foreign Secretary, 1951.

9. (1888-1968); a Labour politician; M.P., 1922-54.

10. Probably Morgan Jones (1885-1939); Labour M.P., 1921-39; member, Joint Select Committee on Indian Constitutional Reforms, 1932-34.

11. In his reply of 9 September 1938, Kripalani wrote that Mahatma Gandhi and others were highly satisfied with the attitude adopted by Jawaharlal in these talks.



There should be a pact of mutual non-aggression between Britain and India. A military alliance was not considered desirable as British policy might be controlled by a reactionary government as today.

A trade agreement would obviously be necessary. This might be part of the treaty or separate from it.

The question of Indian nationals in other countries would have to be considered, e.g., in Mauritius where Indians were domiciled for generations. Such Indians might be given the right to choose as to whether they want to become citizens of India or prefer to continue as British subjects.

It would be necessary to have separate treaties with the British dominions but this can be considered later.

The question of federation was, as I have stated, not discussed by me with Linlithgow. But it was discussed with many others. My general line was that it was quite impossible for us to accept federation as it was, or even with minor variations, and any attempt to impose it will be stoutly resisted. I pressed always that the only proper and effective way of dealing with the Indian problem was to recognise our right of self-determination and agree to the constituent assembly. If that was not done then we would judge everything from one point of view: does this add to our real strength and enable us to go to independence? Does it strengthen us in case of conflict with the British Government? If so we might work it, though this would not be in a spirit of friendship and the background would always be there and the attempt to go forward to independence always present. Ultimately we would gain our objective but Britain would not gain our friendship as she might otherwise do.

In any event, even to work federation, the Congress had laid down that, among other things, it was essential for the princes federating to have a democratic and constitutional method of election for the federation in their states, approximating to that in the provinces. This by itself was not enough as we could not accept the reserved subjects or 'safeguards'. But if the first point was settled to our satisfaction, there was a possibility of other points being considered in a favourable atmosphere. In any event, all these 'safeguards', etc., would have to remain in abeyance.

I was informed by some persons that Bhulabhai Desai had conveyed a different impression to people here and had indicated that if some minor changes were made the federation would be accepted.<sup>12</sup> I could only say that he must have been misunderstood as the Congress resolution and policy were quite clear.<sup>13</sup>

12. Desai denied that he had said anything to this effect.

13. See *Selected Works*, Vol. 8, p. 379.

So much for India.

I should like to add a few words about the position of the present British Government. This is apparently strong and perhaps is so. And yet there is a strong element of uncertainty about it. Foreign policy is playing a more important role than domestic policy and the present foreign policy is very unpopular among large sections of people, including staunch Conservatives. Chamberlain, the Prime Minister, is definitely unpopular. He continues and might continue because there is no feasible alternative. The Labour Party is very weak in leadership and is extraordinarily mediocre. It has no striking personality. In effect, the strongest and ablest critic of the government's foreign policy is Winston Churchill. The changing and critical foreign situation makes the British generally apprehensive of changing the government. But it is quite possible that a change might take place bringing a kind of coalition. Everything is really dominated by foreign affairs, and my success, such as it was, in putting India into the picture was due to my considering the Indian problem always in relation to the international situation.

I shall be going to Czechoslovakia soon for a week. Afterwards to Vienna and Budapest. There is a chance of my proceeding further to Turkey. I want to be back in Geneva early in September about the time the League assembly meets. After that I go to England for a week or ten days.

I want to go to Russia but I am not sure yet if I will go. Also if possible I want to visit some of the Asiatic Muslim countries—Iran, Iraq—on my way back. I think we should develop contacts with them and my visit will be useful. But all this is vague and uncertain. If I go to all these places my return to India might be delayed to the third week of November or thereabouts. Otherwise, I should return towards the end of October.

I think my visit, though entirely informal, has borne good results in making people in many countries feel the importance of India at the present juncture and still more so in the future. It seems to me highly desirable that our foreign department should develop and be well-organised to keep up our contacts with the outside world and keep us in touch with developments. Whatever our own views about the future in India might be, India is bound to play an important and ever-growing part in international affairs and we should prepare ourselves for it.

Our contacts with China are at present good and close. The decision by us to send a medical mission has had the happiest results. I think it very necessary that these contacts should be increased for China is not only our neighbour and intimately connected with us, but is likely to play an important part in world affairs in the future. There is a proposal



to set up an international hospital in China, to be opened on October 10th, the anniversary of the Chinese Republic. We have been especially invited to send representatives for this function. I made it clear that we were hardly in a position to make any financial contribution towards the hospital. All we could do was to support our medical unit, which might later attach itself to the international hospital. I said further that some members of this unit might be nominated by the Congress to represent it at the function on October 10th, 1938.

I hope that we shall continue with vigour our China campaign in India—both in regard to the medical unit and the boycott of Japanese goods. This boycott has been more successful than many of us imagined as the export figures show. October 10th might be celebrated by us in India as a special China Day.

This note is a terribly long one. My apologies to my colleagues of the Working Committee. But long though it is, I have only put down a fraction of what I have in mind and what I would like to communicate to the Working Committee. May I request that the contents of this note be kept strictly confidential?

#### 42. To Bharati Sarabhai<sup>1</sup>

Houlgate  
3.8.38

My dear Bharati,

It is just two months since I left India. I have not written to you or even acknowledged your letter to me. What must you have thought of me? I cannot forgive myself and yet such things happen. I am a regular correspondent and I have to deal with a host of letters. But when personal letters come, they are put away separately. I do not wish to answer them with my business correspondence. I cannot deal with them through a secretary. I want to answer them at leisure when the mood to do so seizes me and so they lie often remembered and yet unanswered.

I thought that the voyage would be quiet and restful and would enable me to do some work which I had long kept by. I did do some work but I found it hard to do much of it. The people on board—mostly Italians and fascists, some Americans, Spaniards, Danes, Englishmen—

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

took an interest in me and absorbed my time. And ever since my arrival in Genoa I got caught in such a whirlpool of activity that it was hardly possible to find time to do the simplest things I wanted to do. Letter-writing was almost completely stopped. I began to deteriorate physically and some doctors insisted on my taking injections and ultra-violet rays and the like. At last I decided to have a few days off and I came to the seaside with Indu. It has not been very restful here either as I had to clear off arrears of work. But at least I have had a little more sleep and sea bathing. We have only been here six days and tomorrow we go *via* Paris to Czechoslovakia.

*Vasantsena*<sup>2</sup> is excellent writing and a really good piece of work. It is astonishingly personal—perhaps that adds greatly to its value. I doubt if I could have written anything quite so personal. But then I am a practising politician and have to be careful. I am told that strong objection is being taken in India to my wearing European clothes here.

What do you propose to do with *Vasantsena*? Are you publishing it?

I am so entangled with my work and so wrapped up in the ideas that fill my mind that I find it difficult to get into tune with questions of life and art as they affect one personally. Sometimes they interest me for they are of fundamental interest to all of us. But when I function impersonally, as I often do, I seem to be far away from them and they seem superficial before the realities that face me. You on the other hand are intensely personal and terribly interested in your developing personality. I am not sure that this deliberate attempt at personal development is always right. May it not lead to hot-house growths? Personality should develop unconsciously and unawares while we are engaged in worthwhile activities. But I suppose the same rule does not apply to each one of us.

The sound of the sea comes to me and it is pleasant to hear. It is my last night here. Soon I shall be back in the maze of European affairs and wonder at the astounding folly of man. My visit to Spain produced a powerful impression on me. It filled me with horror and yet it inspired me.

I have no news of Mridula. Indeed I have little news of India. Perhaps it is as well that I am cut off.

I shall return to you *Vasantsena* soon.

Love,

Yours,  
Jawaharlal

2. These were the opening chapters of an unpublished memoir.



### 43. Indian Students Abroad<sup>1</sup>

In India students are not discouraged to come to Germany but they are also not encouraged. This is so on account of the political regime that exists in Germany. In the beginning the treatment meted out to Indians was definitely bad. That was due partially to the racial theory, and also to a certain extent to the desire to please the British. Herr Hitler's reference to British rule in India as something necessary is not unknown in India.

However, the main questions that face the students are, firstly, the treatment meted out to them, and, secondly, the question of study itself. As far as the study of sciences is concerned probably progress is still being made in Germany. But taking education as a whole there is no progress. Political ideology imposed from above by people who may not be primarily concerned with education can have only bad results. Of course, that is the case almost everywhere. Glorification of the empire is a tenet that has been imposed on the prevailing system of education in the British Empire. Still the Nazis are far more advanced in this respect than anybody else. Books are burned and professors renowned all over the world are chased out of the country. Thus the intellectual level of the country could not but fall and this would become apparent as years go by.

I recently had a conversation with Professor Gilbert Murray<sup>2</sup> on this subject. According to him an extremely curious thing is happening in Europe. This is a repetition of the renaissance in a reversed sense. Then the Greek scholars chased out of Turkey helped in the intellectual development of Europe where they migrated. Now it is the European scholars who are migrating to Turkey, Palestine and other countries, and there is no doubt that these countries will benefit from it.

There are people in India who do not see the value of going abroad for studies. They are entirely wrong. However, I am not in favour of everybody going to England for studies although for various reasons England affords to many Indians the best opportunity for studies. What India needs is men with specialised knowledge and training. If India has

1. Speech to Indian students, Munich, 8 August 1938. From *The Hindustan Times*, 22 August 1938.
2. (1866-1957); British classical scholar and professor of Greek at Glasgow and Oxford universities; chairman of the International Committee for Intellectual Cooperation of the League of Nations.

the power she would send hundreds of students to different countries to have technical education and acquire knowledge, as India would need the services of all such men.

But whatever be the subject of study, the students should never forget the true aim of their studies which is to work for the betterment of the material conditions of the people of India and help them to become free in the fullest sense of the word.

#### 44. To J. B. Kripalani<sup>1</sup>

Prague  
16.8.38

My dear Jivat,

I enclose a translation of Nahas Pasha's letter.<sup>2</sup> I am sending a copy to Subhas also. You will notice that such pressing invitations cannot be lightly ignored and I would urge the Working Committee to accept. The President should write directly to Nahas Pasha. His various addresses are given in his letter. I shall probably meet him in September in Switzerland.

The central European situation is very critical and the worst is feared. Personally I still think that war will not come but it is a doubtful issue. I have no doubt in my mind that war can be prevented if the British Government adopted a strong attitude in favour of Czechoslovakia, but that is exactly what it is not doing. It is astonishing how the British Government goes on encouraging indirectly Hitler and his gang. Hitler is now concentrating troops on the frontiers and it is expected that numerous petty incidents will be created in the German districts of Czechoslovakia to give an excuse to Hitler to intervene. The Czechs are behaving well under the strain and are resolved to resist whatever happens. Meanwhile Runciman<sup>3</sup> is here and he is known to be partial to Hitler to some extent. But what is astounding is how the 100% British pacifists are behaving. One of these apparently well-meaning

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-71/1938, p. 12, N.M.M.L.

2. Nahas Pasha, in his letter of 2 August 1938, invited the Congress to send a delegation to Egypt to attend the National Wafdist Congress on 24-25 November 1938. He wrote that "it has been decided to give to this year's session a wider oriental significance by inviting Indian Congress as well as the representatives of the oppressed peoples of the Near East..."

3. Walter Runciman (1870-1949); British Conservative politician; acted with little success as mediator in August-September 1938 between the Czech Government and the Sudeten Germans.



persons—Lord Allen of Hurtwood<sup>4</sup>—is here and is functioning as the advocate and emissary of Hitler urging the Czech Government to surrender all along the line to Hitler and hand over a big chunk of the country to Hitler. That, of course, means the end of Czechoslovakia and the complete domination of Hitler right up to the Black Sea.

If war comes, it is unlikely to remain confined to two countries. It will spread and thus all manner of terrible things will happen. Personally, I think that it is bound to end in Hitler's defeat.

In England there is talk of having another R.T.C. to consider the federation issue. Also suggestions are made in the papers that the Muslim League should be consulted.

Vijayalakshmi and I shall return to London soon and expect to be there on the 25th August.

Yours affly.,  
Jawahar

4. (1889-1939); British pacifist and labour leader; thrice imprisoned for refusal to serve in armed forces; visited Hitler and Goering and this later led to his break with the labour movement.

#### 45. The Czech Crisis<sup>1</sup>

I do not intend to give advice on internal matters, because the problems of Czechoslovakia are so intricate that it is impossible even with the best sources of information being available to arrive at any definite conclusion.

I am chiefly interested in matters of local administration here. The experience I gain might be put to immediate use for the benefit of India.

From the international point of view I am much interested in the Czechoslovak problem. I would not like to see any solution which might weaken the state. I do not however see why the fullest equality and opportunity should not be given to all the nationalities within the framework of a democratic constitution.

I consider the question of plebiscite as a most intricate and involved one. The fact is that Europe has got itself into a mess. The municipal elections in May and June could however be interpreted as a kind

1. Interview to the press, Prague, 17 August 1938. From *The Hindu*, 18 August 1938.

of plebiscite.<sup>2</sup> India has great sympathies with Czechoslovakia but on the question of war she would have to consider her own interests. Besides, it would be extraordinary to ask a subject country to fight for Great Britain on the Continent. In any case such a decision must be left to India herself. Our fight for democratic independence depends on whether the democratic or imperialist-fascist system is victorious. It would be stupid to assume that we would support a fascist power, merely because it finds itself in conflict with England. Neither nationalist-socialist nor Italian propaganda has a place in India.

India would not support Great Britain merely because she is engaged in fighting a fascist or Nazi power. India would decide according to the circumstances of the case and would not blindly follow Great Britain, unless the Indian political problem was solved to India's satisfaction, without further delay.

2. Though the six-party coalition government in Czechoslovakia had agreed to hold municipal elections in the Sudeten German region in order to placate Henlein, the Sudeten leader, the policy of persecution and terrorization launched by Nazi Germany in the region made the government cautious.

#### 46. The Birth of the National Herald<sup>1</sup>

News has reached me that the *National Herald* will soon make its first appearance. This appearance of a new daily newspaper is an event of some importance to us and to our cause, and it is well that we should seek to find out the significance of it.

Circumstances have connected me with it in an intimate capacity and reluctantly and with hesitation I have agreed to this connection. This hesitation was due partly to my being wary of newspapers and partly to my doubting my capacity to undertake an additional burden of this magnitude. For to run a daily newspaper today involves a great responsibility which should not be lightly undertaken. Yet the very nature of

1. Budapest, 21 August 1938. Inaugural issue of the *National Herald*, 9 September 1938.



the burden and the responsibility made me feel that I could not shirk it, and that I must give my full cooperation to my colleagues in this heavy task.

At any time the business of running a daily newspaper is a difficult one involving decisions on important matters of policy. For a newspaper like the *National Herald* which seeks to represent not the small group that runs it, but to be the herald of a great national movement, and to give utterance to the urges and thoughts of a people struggling for freedom and seeking ways to develop themselves in a thousand directions, the task is incomparably heavier. We have chosen a time to give birth to this newspaper when the world hovers on the brink of war and goes from one crisis to another. The new phase of world revolution, that began in August 1914 with the Great War, continues to shake the world, and is likely to continue for many long years to come till another equilibrium is established. Fate has tied us to this great and disturbing period of human history and we cannot escape that fate.

I write this article as I sit in a great city in central Europe, and for the past two weeks I have moved about in this part of the world and sensed the tension and fear that possess the people. On the German frontier a million and a half men are massed together and armies move about in pretence of war. Czechoslovakia is ready to spring to her own defence as soon as any aggression takes place. Loudspeakers in the cities give directions for air raids—buy gas-masks, beware of the warning signal and take shelter immediately. Sometimes the noise of the siren envelops the city—a weird, piercing, prolonged cry, full of pain and fear. This is the warning of an air raid and it tells the people that danger is coming from the sky. Hurry, hurry, put on your gas-masks, take shelter, go into the underground caverns before the death-dealing bomb hurtles through the sky and crashes on the noble buildings that are the pride of the city. That signal is only a rehearsal so far in Europe except in Spain. In Barcelona I heard it as a prelude to a rain of bombs and death and destruction.

The little country of Czechoslovakia, an island of democracy in a sea of reaction, carries on its work normally in spite of this tumult of war and preparation for war. Her men and women move calmly but there is determination in their eyes. The beautiful city of Prague, reminding me by its name of my own home town, has a peaceful old-world look as it stretches on either side of the winding river. It grows lovelier still as the evening shadows fall and thousands of lights glimmer on the sloping hillsides. I wonder what the fate of this city will be, as of many another city in Europe, when war comes. Madrid, Valencia, Barcelona, Canton, Hankow, Shanghai.

Yet war need not come, perhaps it will not come; it can be stopped. But sometimes one feels as if we were all in the grip of tragedy, after the Greek fashion, which moves inevitably and inexorably to a predestined catastrophe.

It is in this world that we live and must play our part. During the last eighteen years we have played a worthy part and written many an unforgettable chapter in India's story. Under Mahatma Gandhi's leadership and his inspiring guidance we have produced life and vitality in our people, hope and courage, discipline and organization, and ideals which make life worthwhile. That is a noble heritage to hand down to the coming generation, and yet our very success increases the burden of responsibility and the complexity of our problems. For success often leads to giddiness and forgetfulness, and petty conflicts arise, and the smaller problems fill our minds. But at this crisis of world history, dare we become small-minded and forget the major problems of our country and age?

It was not the prospect of petty success and trivial achievement that moved our millions to action and sacrifice. We aimed high and laboured to make India a great nation, standing for peace and freedom in the world, to rid her millions of their appalling poverty and distress and open out avenues of progress and self-development to them. To dream, to work hard for the realisation of that dream, and to see that dream materialise before our eyes—that is fulfilment in life.

What is the aim and purpose of the *National Herald*? To be a great newspaper giving its readers the world's news faithfully and keeping them in touch with the forces and ideas that are shaping human destiny. Not to suppress or distort news in the mistaken belief that it might injure our cause. We cannot serve our cause by untruth, we cannot serve the public by withholding news and thus preventing it from forming right judgment, we cannot advance democracy by methods dear to the fascists, we cannot be true to the spirit and ideals of journalism itself by suppression or distortion of news.

But the *National Herald* stands for something more than the mere dissemination of correct news. It is a missionary in the cause of Indian freedom, of world peace based on freedom and cooperation between peoples and nations. It will view everything from this point of view and will endeavour in every way to serve this great cause. It is no pale anaemic newspaper with no particular views of its own, seeking to avoid the burden of decision by sitting on the fence. That is not how we conceive a journal to act or to serve the public. The hour is heavy with destiny. Are we to be merely lookers-on while others mould events?



Broadly speaking, this journal will represent the policy and programme of the Indian National Congress. It will do so because it believes in that policy and programme. It will also do so because the Congress is the one vital mass organisation which, by its long record of struggle and sacrifice, has come to represent the aims and aspirations as well as the strength of the Indian people. The *National Herald* is not an official organ of the Congress and what it may say will not commit the Congress. It may criticise any particular decision of the Congress or urge the adoption or variation of some policy. But if it does so, it will necessarily be in all friendliness and with the desire to strengthen the Congress and further the cause the Congress has at heart. Our national movement is a vital one representing the living forces of the nation. We have to be on our guard to prevent it, by self-criticism and a desire to learn and profit by experience, from hardening and losing that vitality and the capacity to adapt itself to changing conditions.

Some of the promoters of this journal are socialists who believe that our problems, in common with the world's problems, will only be solved by the adoption of the economic framework of society which goes under the name of socialism. Other promoters are not socialists. Yet there is comradeship between the two and full cooperation, not only in the political objective of independence but in many an immediate social objective also. For it must be remembered that the Congress is committed to vital social and economic changes and has laboured for them for many years. The Congress stands for the hundreds of millions of India and these millions have clung to the Congress, with hope and affection, because it brought to them the promise of relief from their many burdens. Their interests must remain paramount in any policy or programme that the Congress might frame. It is in their interest that the independence of India and elimination of empire are essential preliminaries to the great social tasks of building a new nation.

Our strength has lain in all of us, even with varying views, standing together in the Congress and cooperating in the common enterprise. We must continue to hold together. There is no other way except the way of short-sighted folly. The *National Herald* therefore does not approve of sectarianism and attempts to disrupt or weaken the national movement and will not encourage them. It must be our endeavour, now as in the past, to lay stress on the common points among us, on the vast measure of agreement, and to tone down our differences.

I trust that this journal will live up to its ideals and that nothing will be written in it with malice or ill will to anyone. I hope also that it will always extend courtesy to those who may disagree with it and deal with them in all fairness. We aim high and we may never forget our

objectives. But we have to take care of our means also, for wrong and ignoble means demoralise and corrupt a people and lead them away from the path leading to the cherished goal. Among the many things Gandhiji has taught us, perhaps the most important has been the emphasis on the means. We forget that lesson at our peril—means and ends, two sides of the same picture, acting and reacting on each other, inseparably linked together. Without the right ends in view, means are a futility leading nowhere; without right means, the end itself fades away and disappears.

This journal is not meant to be a profit-making business undertaking. It is not in the spirit of profit and dividends that it has been launched. No one who seeks monetary gain for himself will find welcome there. Yet an undertaking of this kind must, if it is to succeed, be conducted efficiently in a business-like way. The service of the country or any cause requires efficiency and cannot be made an excuse for incompetence and slackness. We look upon this newspaper as a great cooperative enterprise in which everyone connected with it, from the directors, the editor and the manager to the office-boy and the compositor in the printing room, shares the excitement and the joy of working together for a cause that stirs us and demands the best that is in us. We seek the cooperation of our readers and the public generally, for the *National Herald* is theirs as much as ours, and without their help and cooperation its capacity for public service cannot be great, and we would ourselves lose interest in it.

And so we launch our venture. May the *National Herald* prove a brave, true and efficient soldier in the cause of Indian freedom and world peace.

#### 47. To J. B. Kripalani<sup>1</sup>

Budapest  
24.8.38

My dear Jivat,

Perhaps you know that I have been held up here because of Indira's illness. It was a serious affair but fortunately she is progressing well and I hope she will be well enough to travel by air within a few days. We expect to be in London by the end of the month. Vijayalakshmi has also been held up here.

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-71/1938, p. 6, N.M.M.L. Extracts.



I have received today, *via* London, your two letters dated the 16th and 17th.

You are right perhaps in accusing me of haste in coming to a conclusion regarding the Working Committee and Krishna Menon.<sup>2</sup> I stand corrected. What struck me as very curious was that the matter should not have been referred to me at all.

The present position is that Krishna Menon is a member of the executive of the I.P.C. on behalf of the Congress. Thus in so far as the work of the I.P.C. is concerned he represents the Congress. He is not otherwise in any way a representative of the Congress. Roughly speaking, the I.P.C. work consists of bringing together all organisations interested in peace and in organising help in the way of food, etc., for those who are suffering from aggression. Thus they have tried to send food to Spain, to organise hospital work in China, to organise protests against bombing, etc. Menon, in addition, has naturally laid stress always on the Indian aspect—the bombing of the north west frontier and on real peace being incompatible with imperialism. These are points on which there can be no two opinions in the Congress at least. The peace movement is growing in strength, and in England, largely on account of Menon's efforts, it is becoming anti-imperialist. Peace and Empire conferences are taking place laying stress on the liquidation of empire so as to oppose fascism effectively and establish peace. There is going to be an important conference of this kind—called the Peace and Empire Congress—in Glasgow on September 24th and 25th. It is supposed to be for the people of the British Empire. It is organised by the Scottish Peace Council and all manner of very mixed people from the Archbishop of Canterbury to extreme left-wingers are the patrons. I have been invited to it and have also been asked for a fraternal delegate on behalf of the Congress. I am afraid I shan't be able to go but I think it is desirable that the Congress should be represented, if this is possible. Also that a message might be sent by the President. I would suggest that Krishna Menon might be asked to go there and lay stress on the Congress emphasis on anti-imperialism. Please let me know what you and our other colleagues think of this.

Mahadeva has sent me a copy of Jinnah's letters to Subhas.<sup>3</sup>

2. In his letter of 11 August 1938, Kripalani wrote to Jawaharlal that the Working Committee had objected to Krishna Menon's representing the Congress at these conferences and meetings and being paid travelling expenses.
3. *Inter alia*, Jinnah wrote to Bose on 2 August 1938, "The Council (of the League) is fully convinced that the Muslim League is the only authoritative and representative political organisation of the Mussalmans of India....The All India Muslim League, therefore, does not require any admission or recognition from the Congress..."

As you know the plight of the Jews in central Europe is terrible. Among them are many brilliant persons, scientists, professors, technicians, experts of various kinds, etc. I feel it would be a good thing for us to utilise the services of a few such experts for our work in India and in order to train our own people. Provincial governments could do so—we lack good human material for the big jobs. The cost would be little, far less than we would have to pay any other experts, foreign or Indian. Some of our big industrialists could also get competent technicians and experts for the development of industry. I know there has been some feeling among professional people, especially doctors, against Jewish doctors settling down in India. I am not thinking in terms of professional people of this kind. I wish you could let me know what the Working Committee's reactions are to these suggestions. If they think something can be done, I can then make further inquiries. Turkey has greatly benefited by such experts; of course we do this from the sole point of view of our own good and not for humanitarian reasons.

When I was in India I suggested that our China medical unit might have someone of a political bent accompanying it. (I mentioned Lohia's name then.) Later I referred to this again in one of my notes to you. I do feel that this is important in view of the developing relations with China and the necessity for contacts and understanding. I do not know if Lohia can go or what he proposes to do after he leaves the A.I.C.C. office. I understand that Raja Hutheesing is keen on accompanying the unit. I should think he would be good and as secretary of the China committee he would be fitting. Could you mention this to the China committee people? A mission of doctors alone will be very one-sided and will not do us as much good as we ought to expect. I believe there are quite enough funds now. More funds and interest will depend on the proper reporting of what is being done there. The doctors will probably not be able to do this. But the main thing is intelligent political contacts with prominent people there. I think Raja will be suited for this. . . .

Love,

Yours,  
Jawahar



48. To J. B. Kripalani<sup>1</sup>

Budapest  
30.8.38

My dear Jivat,

I have stayed on so long here owing to Indira's illness. She is much better now and we are therefore going to London by air on September 1st. Vijayalakshmi is accompanying us.

Europe is a volcano on the point of bursting. I have thought repeatedly of sending you long notes for the Working Committee dealing with the European crisis as well as the minority question in Czechoslovakia.<sup>2</sup> The latter is of course the merest pretext for the crisis which is solely due to Hitler's determination to dominate Europe by crushing Czechoslovakia and thus reaching Rumania with her oil fields and wheat. Nevertheless, the minority question is full of interest and warning for us and we might learn something from it. But I have been unable to write in spite of several attempts. Partly this has been due to lack of time owing to Indira's illness, but largely owing to the mass of material in my head which I cannot easily compress into a note.

But the crisis grows and the volcano might burst at any moment. September is the critical month and mid-September the worst time. If September passes without war, there will in all likelihood be no war at any rate till next spring. The decision rests with Hitler and Hitler alone. Nobody else is going to start a war.

It is obvious that a war once started will shake and paralyse the world and affect India deeply. Our attitude and the actions we might take will have the most vital consequences for India's future. This attitude will depend on many factors and we can hardly lay down hard and fast rules for every contingency. But it does seem to me very important that the Working Committee should meet and give full thought to the situation and prepare themselves for possible happenings. They must not be caught unawares and unprepared. Almost every cabinet in the world is meeting daily and giving anxious thought to the problem. We cannot ignore it or just wait for things to happen before we consider them.

It is therefore my earnest request that the Working Committee should meet urgently to consider the European crisis. This fact should be made public and this in itself will have important consequences. What the

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-71/1938, p. 10, N.M.M.L.

2. Sudeten Germans, the Slovaks and Hungarians constituted substantial minority groups in the Czechoslovak Republic.

Working Committee decides I shall not presume to suggest. Obviously its decisions will be partly in the form of resolutions to be made public and partly confidential. Some may be provisional. The public resolutions would necessarily be rather vague, and more or less on the lines of the Haripura resolution.<sup>3</sup> The Working Committee might express its sympathy with the democratic forces in Europe and disapprove of Nazi attempts at aggression. But the main thing is to state emphatically that in the event of war, India will not be at war with any country except by an express decision of the people of India. How the people of India will or can decide is another matter. Certainly, I would not accept the decision of the central assembly as constituted today. However this point need not be gone into our resolution. What I am suggesting is the very attitude which the dominions have taken up. Even General Smuts,<sup>4</sup> who is in favour of South Africa joining a war if England is a party to it, has made it clear that an English declaration of war does not commit South Africa. I do think that a strong reiteration of this by us has great value at present. To this should be added a rider to the effect that an imposed war will be resisted. Of course the Working Committee should express the hope that war will be avoided.

The fact that the Working Committee meets urgently, especially to consider the world crisis and danger of war, will be of great significance and will make it clear that we intend to play a part in international affairs when they affect us.

Yours affly.,  
Jawahar

3. See *Selected Works*, Vol. 8, p. 740.

4. Jan Christian Smuts (1870-1950); South African soldier and politician; opposed the British in the Boer War, 1899-1902; minister, 1910-19; Prime Minister of the Government of South Africa, 1919-24; antagonist and later friend of Mahatma Gandhi.



## 49. The Tension in Europe<sup>1</sup>

The European tension is influenced by wider factors than is generally realised. Some of these can be traced to the places which are outside Europe. This also underlines the importance for a country like India to have a closer look at the tension in Europe. The tension is great and it suggests, as alternatives, two courses: first, an advance to a big-scale armed conflict, and, second, an avoidance of this conflict. The latter implies a wide settlement, taking into consideration the popular struggles which are now being waged for the establishment of a democratic system in some of the important foreign-dominated countries. In other words, the latter course, if it has to assert itself, has to be more genuine and take necessary note of the popular strivings. Great Britain has, in this regard, to carry great responsibility because it is the British attitude which will influence one or the other of the alternatives. India has also a role to play as her stand will be a matter of interest and also weight upon Britain.

India at the moment is dissatisfied with British foreign policy. This has been evidenced in connection with the Abyssinian, Spanish and Chinese questions. On all these questions, the Indian stand has been different from the stand taken by the British Government. The policy of the latter has been one of showing favour to the fascist powers. Certain polemics of the latter basically make no difference to this, even as several of the formal declarations of the former. A confusion is caused by some manifestations of clashes between the imperialist groups in connection with certain moves and steps for the extension of their hold or increase of their bargaining power. The present British Government's attitude of favouring the fascist powers, despite threats in various ways suggested by the latter to British imperialistic interests, indicates clearly enough an even greater apprehension of the forces that are feared will gain strength by an adoption of the democratic course. Britain among the powers is also in a very difficult position owing to the nature of her empire as now constituted and maintained.

The struggle in India is essentially and fundamentally an anti-imperialist one. As such, it is also opposed to fascism which vigorously supports the imperialist philosophy. While India is keen on getting out of the imperialist hold and with this aim carries on her struggle, she has

1. Report of a talk with the correspondent of *Amrita Bazar Patrika* in Prague, printed on 31 August 1938.

no desire to support the expansionist drives of the fascist powers merely on account of the manifestations of clashes within the imperialist camp. To do so would not only arrest the progress of the Indian movement but may also produce dangerous consequences for it. The propaganda attempted to be pushed by fascist sources is an evidence of the Indian movement holding an advanced ideological basis.

The future of Anglo-Indian relations will depend upon the strength of the popular movement in India and the tendency in concerned circles in Britain to take to a progressive course. A policy based on readiness to adopt such a course will help to put Anglo-Indian relations on a sound basis. This could then prove a factor in favour of the preservation of peace and for the retention of a good balance in the East. India's movement for freedom has gained great strength and is bound to gain greater strength as the time passes. Britain has more to gain by timely adjustments with the forces that really matter.

The Czechoslovak question has today advanced to a position of international importance and is therefore of interest to India. The Czechoslovak issue in its present form has less to do with the minority issue as generally understood. Now the problem is linked with an expansionist course visualized by Germany. In other words, the opposing forces are Germany's aim to extend her hold in central and south-eastern Europe and Czechoslovakia's alertness to uphold her independence and sovereignty which she feels are being endangered by the former. The calmness shown by Czechoslovakia in the face of such a serious danger is very impressive. The situation has also been allowed greatly to advance to a critical stage by a policy of drift and hesitancy followed by Britain. All lovers of freedom will wish for the successful and healthy emergence of this peaceful and progressive democratic republic.

## 50. Nationalism and the Mass Struggle in India<sup>1</sup>

It is not a particularly easy task to give a picture of the situation in India which is at the same time concise and yet deals with all the major problems that have come up.

1. *Labour Monthly* (London), August 1938.



In India, as *Labour Monthly* readers know, the National Congress represents the nationalist movement and the nationalist urge of the people. It was started, more than 50 years ago, as a small group who were very much anglicised, principally middle class persons and who spoke in very moderate and loyal language. It grew because it represented the nationalist urge in the people, fundamentally an urge against domination by a foreign government, which developed widely among the middle classes. It took the lower middle classes into its path, and during the last 20 years or so it began to approach the peasantry, which is the biggest group or class in India. When it did this, it became a real live organisation. So far it had been an organisation more or less at the top, and even the divisions in it called 'moderate' and 'extremist' did not differ from each other very much.

Mr. Gandhi's contribution to the Congress, his essential contribution about 20 years ago, was to bring the peasantry into the Congress. The whole centre of gravity of the Congress changed. More and more we began to go to the peasants first of all as persons who thought that they had nothing to learn from the peasants, but to teach them and tell them what to do. But inevitably we found that we had much to learn. We became interested in the peasant problem, which was no part of the nationalist movement. It might almost be said that we wanted to use the peasants in the cause of nationalism. We had started thinking in terms of developing strength to meet British imperialism, but unless the masses supported the cause of nationalism we had no effective strength. Inevitably, therefore, we had to go to the peasants. We organised them on nationalist lines, but the peasant question became more and more an important one to consider. Indeed the peasant, when he heard us talk in terms of Swaraj or freedom or independence, interpreted it in terms of getting rid of his own burdens. Independence had no other special meaning for him. It was on these lines that the peasantry began to get organised and to become politically conscious, and, on the other hand, the Congress began to grow peasant-conscious.

The leadership of the Congress remained as before in middle class hands, but from the upper middle class it moved to the lower middle class. Even now it might be said that the leadership is largely in the hands of the lower middle class with a certain upper middle class sprinkling and a very strong peasant influence in it. Questions of the industrial workers have also influenced the Congress. They were not in it as such or as organised groups, but as individuals. They overlapped to a large extent with the peasantry. The workers' problems therefore came before the Congress, but it was the peasant problem that essentially occupied it.

At the present moment, therefore, the Congress is a powerful, disciplined organisation. The last 18 years of consistent struggle with British imperialism have given the people a great deal of discipline, showed them how to work unitedly and made it a very effective organisation. In fact, there is no other organisation in India which can compare with it in its approach to the masses or in its strength. The trade unions in India had a very chequered career. They mostly began about 20 years ago and grew in strength until about 8 or 9 years ago, when the Trade Union Congress broke up. That period coincided with a big civil disobedience movement which was crushed by the government. Shortly before, the Meerut trial had taken place and the government tried to crush at the same time all trade union activities as well as the nationalist movement. For two or three years the normal work was interrupted and the struggle gradually grew weaker.

Then followed the Round Table Conferences. This was an attempt to introduce some kind of constitution that would please most of the reactionary elements and might please other moderate elements, an attempt to unite them against the more radical sections in India. To some extent the British Government succeeded for the moment. There could be no immediate big reaction and they were able to pass their constitution. The Congress had been an illegal organisation for many years. As soon as we were able to, we started again, regained our contacts with the peasantry and soon rebuilt our organisation.

Elections under the new constitution were held shortly afterwards. There was considerable controversy as to what we should do. If we had been strong enough, we should probably have taken a strong line to begin with, but we were only able to criticise and condemn the constitution. We decided to take part in the elections, generally because it gave us a very fine opportunity of working among the masses, but also because there was no alternative programme for us. The question of whether after the elections we should accept any offices under the constitution or not was left undecided. We carried on a big election campaign, reaching almost every single village, not only in British India. We did not go to the 30 million voters only, but to the two or three hundred million of the people, and the result was a great victory for the Congress. In these elections practically all the radically advanced groups worked together, which was one of the reasons why the Congress emerged so successfully.

Now the Congress, being a nationalist movement, inevitably has all kinds of people in it. Of course all those who are absolutely pro-imperialist are out of it, because it is an essentially anti-imperialist organisation. But it has people who are very moderate in politics and very reactionary in



social matters, and it has at the other extreme a fair number of socialists, some communists and others who have recently been cooperating with it. But the Congress also consists of a very large middle section which is certainly anti-imperialist, which is vaguely favourable to socialism and which is pro-peasant because of our work among the peasantry and generally pro-worker too. It is this section which ultimately decides what policy should be. Ordinarily this great middle section goes to the 'left', and fairly far to the left if there is nothing to pull it back. Naturally the small right wing tries to pull it back and has some power to do this.

It should be remembered that the terms 'left' and 'right' are somewhat loosely used in India and have not the same significance as in the West. Thus a person may be very 'left' or advanced in a political and nationalist sense and yet 'right' in a social sense. He may be a good anti-imperialist and may have a record of effective struggle against the British Government. He is respected for this and commands influence. This seeming contradiction arises from the fact that there are two parallel movements — the political and the social. The problem in India is to coordinate and integrate these two.

Apart from these sections, there is Mr. Gandhi who occupies a peculiar position. He does not belong to the right wing, although they always seek his support, as only if they can get it does the right wing count in the Congress. There is no doubt that Mr. Gandhi has changed the whole Congress, the whole nationalist movement in India. He has given it tremendous mass backing and tremendous mass strength. He has awakened people in India to an extraordinary extent and awakened them more or less in a revolutionary direction. He has adopted revolutionary methods, but he also attaches the greatest importance to passive and nonviolent methods. He obstructs anything which he fears will lead to violence, but apart from that his tendency has always been towards the 'left'. Whatever views may be held about him, there is no doubt that he is a tremendous power in India today. His popularity among the Indian people is no less than it ever was, except among certain 'leftist' elements.

In the last two or three years there has been a crystallisation of socialist opinion in the Congress. This resulted largely from the increase in the members of the Congress and came primarily from contact with the masses. But intellectually it also arose from the fact that many people went to prison and there read a large number of books. When they were released they discussed matters among themselves and gradually a certain socialist group came into existence. Three or four years ago this gave rise to the Congress Socialist Party. This took place during a period of reaction while the right group in the Congress was in the ascendancy. The Congress Socialist group immediately came into conflict with this right

group, but in such a way that it antagonised the large middle group and did not succeed, as it might have done, in carrying this large anti-imperialist group with it. About two years ago this antagonism lessened to some extent. The feeling grew that we must work together on an anti-imperialist basis, that otherwise each group was weak and powerless. We had to put this programme of anti-imperialism and independence in the forefront and for the rest to carry on propaganda. This was the position for a year or two prior to the elections.

After the elections the Congress had to face actual problems. It was not so easy to pass a resolution that would please everybody. The acceptance of office by Congress ministers resulted in two different tendencies. On the one hand, there was a tremendous feeling of awakening among the people, both the peasantry and the workers, a feeling as if a great burden had been removed and that big things were going on. This resulted among the workers in big strikes, and among the peasantry in a ferment which took the form not of any particular action but of large demonstrations and a new aggressiveness which they developed in dealing with their landlords or landlords' agents or with the police. They were not so easily cowed down. Where previously they might have put up with a beating from a policeman, now if he even spoke to them offensively they would take umbrage and report the matter. Now, they thought they had their own ministers; they must come to right decisions. Among the workers, too, there was the growing feeling that they were not going to be suppressed in the way they used to be. In several big strikes, for instance, the strikers knew very well that the police would not take the same action as in the past.

On the other hand, there was obviously a tendency for the Congress leaders to become slightly more compromising. They were dealing with day to day problems, meeting the Governor and others and trying to find a way out which usually took the form of some kind of a middle way. Sometimes when there was a conflict, the Governor gave way. But on two or three occasions the Governor did not give way and the ministers resigned. The issue was not, perhaps, a very vital one, but the importance was psychological. One such issue was the release of political prisoners. The ministers resigned but when they had done so, the Governor reversed his decision and gave way.<sup>2</sup> The simple reason was that the Governor and the Viceroy and the British Government were afraid of a conflict. They saw that the nationalist movement had grown much stronger than it had ever been before and much better organised and were unwilling to fight it. There was also the influence of the international situation.

2. See *Selected Works*, Vol. 8, pp. 378-379.



It was very much against their interests to seek a conflict in India with the international situation in its present state. They therefore adopted the very unusual course for the British Government and actually climbed down.

One result of these resignations was that they had to accept the same ministers. They could not hold fresh elections, because these would have resulted in a bigger majority for the Congress and an election campaign which would again have roused the masses. The only alternative was for them to set aside the constitution and govern directly under martial law. That would have meant increasing the conflict, and they accordingly accepted the situation and drew back.

One of the fundamental things of the Indian situation as far as the British Government is concerned is that along with the growth of the nationalist movement the international situation puts that movement in a very strong position. It is uncertain, of course, how far that situation will be used, but everybody in India realises that to some extent it will be used. We have laid stress on two main things. First of all, if any attempt is made to supplement this constitution by bringing in federation it will lead to conflict. We are all opposed to federation which we look upon as the worst part of the constitution. Secondly, we have laid stress on the fact that if there is any outside crisis and war, we are not going to be ordered about for the British Government. It is for the Indian people to decide whether they take part in war or not. It may further be said that they propose to take no part in imperialist war. That is a matter which is exercising the minds of British officials in India who are wondering what, in a moment of crisis, India may do.

As far as our internal problems are concerned, they are getting very complex and very difficult; more and more social questions are appearing within the nationalist movement. On the one hand, there is this disrupting tendency, which is inevitable to some extent. On the other, there is a powerful urge to keep united. If we do not keep united as an anti-imperialist front, we shall become weak and unable to carry on effective struggle against British imperialism. So far this urge for unity has been much stronger than the other. I think it is likely to continue and I believe that it is right that it should continue as such. Although there is a great deal of criticism of each other, every group recognises that we must hold together.

The peasant movement in India, as has been pointed out, has grown more aggressive and more self-reliant. This took the form of big demands. As a matter of fact some sections of the Congress had been thinking in terms of peasant demands for many years. Here it may be pointed out that the Congress demands many things. It is a national organisation

spread out right from the northern frontier to the south. In almost every village some traces of it can be found, some members of it and a committee, but the situation varies in different provinces. There is a fair measure of provincial autonomy, though in matters of policy the national bodies have the decisive authority. Some provinces are more pro-peasant and pro-worker than others, as, for instance, the United Provinces. There the Congress movement is itself largely a peasant movement, with the result that no separate peasant movement of any consequence has arisen, whereas, in other parts, peasant movements have developed because the peasantry did not find the same field within the Congress. Generally speaking, the Congress programme was very pro-peasant, but when the ministries began to function, difficulties of two kinds appeared. One was due to the mixed character of the Congress, which even includes some landlords with the exception of the very big ones. This acted as a check on legislation. Also there was the fact that there are two houses, an upper house elected by a very restricted franchise and consisting generally of big landlords, and a more popular house. The upper house would certainly reject any big agrarian measure that came before it. Therefore in a province such as, for instance, Bihar, it was decided that the best course was to pass a moderate measure of agrarian reform quickly.<sup>3</sup> A compromise measure was agreed with the upper house and became a law, but the peasantry was not wholly satisfied with it and the peasant movement came into conflict with the Congress movement. In the United Provinces, on the other hand, a more far-reaching measure was put forward which is still being discussed in the assembly.<sup>4</sup> It is bound to result in conflict between the two houses, but what form this will take cannot be foretold. But there the measure has the support of the peasants.

This land problem is fundamental in India and cannot be solved under the present land system. The ministries can go on functioning and can tackle other problems, but while this problem is postponed it becomes more acute. The ministers have tackled it partly because they promised to do so, and also for the reason that they personally want the support of the peasants in any future conflict.

3. The Bihar Government had enacted agrarian laws in 1938 to provide relief to tenants in respect of rent, ensure unrestricted right of transfer of occupancy holdings, grant occupancy rights to under-tenants and facilitate restoration of lands sold in execution of decrees for arrears of rent.
4. The U.P. Tenancy Act of 1939 changed the system of *sir* land (the personal estate of the landlords) and granted them the right to cultivate such land themselves. It conferred hereditary status upon statutory tenants and limited the sub-leases.



In the same way the question of industrial workers has been tackled. Various committees were appointed, and, on the whole, their reports were favourable to the workers. They recommended a rise in wages and improvements in many other directions. In Bombay, which is the most industrialised province, the employers reluctantly accepted the recommendations of the government and the committee and gave a rise in wages. In the United Provinces, however, the committee appointed by the government recommended more or less the same changes as in Bombay, but the employers thereupon retorted with an aggressive memorandum rejecting everything recommended and criticising the government very strongly as a partial body. Thereupon a big strike took place in Cawnpore,<sup>5</sup> which has apparently now been settled and the rise in wages has been granted.

Generally speaking, then, both the peasantry and the workers have gained something in standards, but, what is more important, they have gained considerably in strength and are more prepared to enter into big disputes. On the other hand, psychologically speaking, the Congress and the Congress ministers have become less revolutionary, sitting as ministers and carrying on the day to day work in cooperation with British officials. The two processes work simultaneously, the masses becoming more aggressive and more revolutionary-minded and the leaders less so. But ultimately what will count is the masses and their problems.

That, then, is the position in India today. There are internal conflicts developing inside the Congress, but, at the same time, there is a strong desire to prevent a split. On the other hand, the conflict with British imperialism is developing on the question of federation, and if there is an international crisis, the attitude of the Congress will also lead to a conflict. It is unlikely that the British Government will do anything much in India, but it is possible that if they went far in the way of changing the present federation scheme and the general government of India, they might win certain groups in the Congress to their side. Even, however, if there is no major conflict, Congress ministries cannot go on functioning very long, unless big changes occur. So many other matters come up that give rise to conflict with prominent British Government officials that the present constitution is likely to break down. The biggest issues will then arise in India.

India is thus, like the rest of the world, far from static, and all manner of dynamic possibilities confront her. Her present constitution, imposed upon her by British imperialism, is essentially unstable and cannot last. Her people are engrossed in their manifold problems, and yet realise more

5. See *Selected Works*, Vol. 8, pp. 329-334 and 351-353.

and more that these problems are connected with international developments. Because of the strength they have developed, they face the future with a measure of confidence and look forward to the day when full power will come to them to enable them to solve their social problems and play an effective part in evolving peace and freedom in the world.

## 51. To J.B. Kripalani<sup>1</sup>

Budapest  
1.9.1938

My dear Jivat,

I enclose copy of a note<sup>2</sup> which I am sending to Govind Ballabh Pant. I think you might consult Rajendra Babu also about it, and any others you think necessary. In view of our annual floods, I think we should try to get some experts to deal with the problem.

Bapu has been sending brief and cryptic letters to Lothian and Agatha Harrison about federation, etc.<sup>3</sup> Lothian interprets them his own way and carries on some kind of private propaganda on those lines. I wish the position could be cleared up by Bapu in a private and full letter, say, addressed to Agatha Harrison. Otherwise confusion is caused. An effort is made to show that Bapu's position regarding federation is essentially different from mine and so they can go ahead with federation.<sup>4</sup> I

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-71/1938, p. 26, N.M.M.L.
2. It contained a list of foreign refugee experts who could be employed in India.
3. Mahatma Gandhi had written to Lord Lothian on 20 January 1938 that if the British Government recognised the Congress "... as the one and only party that can successfully resist the Government and deliver goods... the only party which, from its inception, has represented all minorities... they will not hesitate to postpone inauguration of the Federation till they have satisfied the Congress."
4. To clear this confusion, Mahatma Gandhi wrote in *Harijan* on 10 October 1938: "I have made it clear that as far as Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and I are concerned, though we may talk in different languages, we are one in most things that matter to India. On the question of federation there never has been any difference of opinion between us. And I have made a rule for myself that so far as the Congress is concerned, if there is an unbridgeable gulf between him and me, his view should prevail. And this for the very good reason that I am not in the Congress and he is in the centre of it and very much in touch with everything relating to the Congress."



have already written at length to you and the Working Committee as to what my attitude here has been.<sup>5</sup> Mahadeva wrote to me that Bapu was 'very happy' to read my note. I do not quite know if that means agreement with it.

In any event I should like to have full instructions from the Working Committee about this matter. I have been expecting something more from you than a mere acknowledgement (with a dash of your own opinion) which has already come.

I do not know how long I shall remain in London this time. Probably I shall go there two or three times in the course of September. I am bound to be asked by various people and it would help me greatly to know the Working Committee's reactions to my note. Subhas has not written to me at all.

Love,

Yours,  
Jawahar

5. See pp. 92-105.

## 52. Germany and War<sup>1</sup>

The present European crisis, in which the world hovers between war and peace, is of the greatest moment for India.

India, of course, is all in favour of world peace, but at the same time she must be prepared for all developments.

If war comes to Europe and even if Britain is a party to it, it does not mean that India would also be a party to it. This point must be realized by all concerned.

India's attitude must be determined by the Indian people, keeping in view their own interests and the interests of world peace and freedom.

Our sympathies naturally are with the progressive democratic world forces. It is for this reason that we sympathize with Czechoslovakia. I have watched with admiration the calm restraint and determination

1. Interview with the correspondent of *The Hindustan Times*, London, 3 September 1938. *The Hindustan Times*, 4 September 1938.

shown by the people of Czechoslovakia in the face of intolerable bullying and danger. The strangest and the most significant feature has been the recent policy of the British Government. Ever-shifting, it has given encouragement to the bullying of Czechoslovakia by the German Government. In Spain also, despite General Franco's contemptuous rejection of the non-intervention committee proposals, the British Government continues to woo General Franco and encourage reactionary forces in Europe.

It is clear that the Czech people will resist with all their might the German aggression, and this will lead to a European and even world war, the result of which will not only be destruction on a vast scale, but also, as it seems most probable, collapse of the Nazi power in Germany. In such a conflict Britain will be involved on the side of Czechoslovakia.

Today, if Britain arms herself feverishly, it is obviously directed against Germany alone; yet British policy goes on supporting Nazi policy.

It is astonishing how personal inclinations and class sympathies of some leading British statesmen are making war daily more probable, although they do not desire it.

The issue of war or peace depends finally on the word of one man, Herr Hitler, whose decision will be governed by the attitude adopted by England. If the British attitude seems favourable, as it is at present despite occasional warnings, then Herr Hitler will not be inclined to start a war.

So far as we in India are concerned, we must be prepared for all eventualities. We must, therefore, sink all petty differences in order to face this great crisis. India must refuse to be made a camp-follower of British foreign policy and oppose being dragged into a war. It is only the Indian people who can decide this issue from the viewpoint of their own freedom and independence.

### 53. India and the European Crisis<sup>1</sup>

The fact that a particular country is an enemy of Britain does not necessarily mean that that country is our friend. Now, is it a fact that a

1. Interview to the correspondent of *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, London, 5 September 1938. From *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 15 September 1938.



country that is friendly to Britain is necessarily an enemy of India or a friend of India? That is why it is absolutely necessary for India to develop her foreign policy all by herself. India wants to be friendly with every nation but she will certainly not cooperate with or encourage reactionary nations. World peace can be established only on the basis of freedom of all the peoples and nations. That is possible only by the elimination of fascism and imperialism from the world. Meanwhile, if crisis arises involving war, it should be clearly understood that the people of India, and they alone, can and will determine what part India shall take in the crisis.

No war can be imposed upon India by British decisions, nor is it to be assumed that India will automatically be at war with a country because the British Government is at war with that country. Any attempt to drag India against her will has to be resisted. India is very sympathetic with the people of Czechoslovakia in the present crisis because they have been a bulwark of democracy in central Europe and it would be a tragedy if fascism triumphs there. We have watched with anxiety and dismay the bullying of the Czech people and their government not only by the Nazi government of Germany but also by the British Government.

#### 54. Note for the Working Committee<sup>1</sup>

I have ventured to send long notes to the Working Committee about the conversations and interviews I have had in London and elsewhere on political matters. I had hoped to receive some direction from the Committee in reply to these notes so that I could guide myself accordingly, but so far I have received none. My visit and activities here produced some impression. Immediately afterwards efforts were made to lessen this impression by private propaganda and insinuations that I did not represent the views of the Working Committee and especially not of Gandhiji, who was the only person who counted. Unfortunately the controversy that took place between the Congress President and Shri Satyamurti, and the unjustifiable use made of Shri Bhulabhai Desai's name, created a certain confusion and helped this insidious propaganda.

1. London, 6 September 1938. A.I.C.C. File No. G-71/1938, pp. 30 (a-e). N.M.M.L.

Shri Bhulabhai Desai's statement should have ended this argument so far as he was concerned, but Gandhiji's name was then freely bandied about, hinting that he was practically prepared to accept federation, subject to some developments.

It is obviously not possible for me to meet these hints and insinuations partly because they are not made publicly and partly because the charge is that I do not represent my colleagues or Gandhiji. My endeavour has been to lay stress throughout that fundamentally on the question of federation there is a unanimity of opinion between Gandhiji, the Congress President, and the other members of the Working Committee.

On my return to London my attention has especially been drawn to the complications that are arising behind the scenes owing to this private propaganda. It appears that some letters that Gandhiji had written to Lord Lothian have been used by him for this purpose. One of these letters was sent quite recently. I have seen copies of these letters. They are brief, and although I can well understand and appreciate what Gandhiji meant, I realise that it is easy to interpret them in some other way, and it is in this other way that they are interpreted.

Mr. Carl Heath (who is a very moderate president of the India Conciliation Group and who is in constant and friendly touch with Lord Lothian as well as the India Office) has especially drawn my attention to these developments both by letters and private talk.

Mr. Heath is very keen on something being done to remove any misapprehensions that might exist in England about the difference of opinions regarding federation between Gandhiji, the Congress President and other members of the Working Committee. How this is to be done he does not say, but he emphasises that before events march ahead much further, the Congress position regarding federation should be reiterated and clarified and the general unanimity of Congress leaders on this issue emphasised. It seems likely that the British Government will take some steps fairly soon. Probably the Viceroy might make a statement on his return to India. The Under Secretary for India<sup>2</sup> is also going to India soon, no doubt to study the position in regard to federation. (It might be added that the Under Secretary is not considered very bright or able. Probably he will spend his time shooting tigers and in bowing as a kind of god-father of ministers, etc.) So Mr. Heath points out that an attitude of drift on our part might have unfortunate consequences and an impasse might be created, the issue of which must be conflict on a vast scale.

2. Findlater Stewart, permanent Under Secretary of State for India, 1932-42.



The gap between the position of the Congress and that of the British Government is so great and the whole background is such that a conflict sometime or other seems likely. If there was any real intention on the part of the British Government to bridge that gap, some change would have been visible in the activities of the central government of India. Even in the provincial governments there is continual friction and delaying methods are employed. The police is still far from being really controlled by the ministers. But the way the central government and the assembly function make it patent that the old spirit continues with hardly any change. I have no doubt that these notes and letters that I send are opened by the agents of the secret service in India, just as letters for me here from India are all delayed and bear traces of being opened. Partly this is due to the fact that the whole structure of government in the provinces, except for the ministers, is much the same as it was previously, partly because the present government in England is astoundingly reactionary and smug, in addition to being not known to possess much intelligence. We must reckon with all these factors which seem to indicate that the British Government is quite foolish enough to take some steps which would lead to conflict. That conflict is in a sense inherent in the situation.

At the same time there are other factors which affect the situation profoundly—the knowledge of the great strength of the national movement and the obvious difficulty of suppressing it by force. And the governing factor—the international situation. Both these tend to prevent a conflict. Lord Linlithgow having himself to face realities in India is to some extent conscious of the problem and is far more of a realist than Lord Zetland who seems to live still in a past age.

Leaving the possibilities of conflict aside, it is clear that our attitude should not be misunderstood or misinterpreted or left in doubt either in the minds of our own people or those of the British Government. It is also highly desirable that this attitude should be a united one and no one should be left to imagine that we are at loggerheads among ourselves. This would be desirable at any time, but at the present crisis in international affairs, and in view of the talks and proposals regarding federation that are going on behind the scenes, failure on our part to clarify these matters might have the most unfortunate consequences.

It is true that the Haripura Congress has laid down the Congress policy on both these questions in sufficiently emphatic language. But much has happened since then and, in view of what is taking place now, it is necessary to reiterate and clarify that position.

In regard to the international crisis it is not easy for the Congress

to lay down finally what it will do under any set of circumstances. The situation changes and grows in complexity. But the essential thing is to emphasise that India cannot and must not be dragged into war by the decision of the British Government. The decision must rest with the Indian people and any attempt to impose a decision will be resisted. The recognition of India's right to decide on peace and war has important bearings on India's right to frame her own constitution.

Regarding the federation, our position fundamentally is that the present scheme is totally unacceptable and if imposed will be resisted. We claim the right to frame our own constitution through a constituent assembly which must be elected by adult franchise by the people. (An attempt is made by Lord Lothian in his letter to water down this idea of a constituent assembly to a farce, namely, a small gathering chiefly consisting of the provincial ministers and some others. This is patently absurd and wholly out of the question. An assembly will only be worthwhile and able to overcome communal differences if it is elected by the mass of the people and brings their real problems to the forefront.)

Gandhiji has often insisted that the Congress does not desire the slightest alteration in the Government of India Act for the simple and all sufficient reason that we want to get rid of the whole Act and cannot accept a modified edition of it.

But he has hinted that under certain circumstances it might be possible to work a federation with a view to add to the national strength and lead up to a real constituent assembly. What are these circumstances? Clearly the essential background is the explicit acknowledgment of India's right to determine her constitution which means that the Government of India Act is a passing and transitional phase which must go soon. That being granted and admitted what else according to him is necessary?

He has laid stress (and so has the Haripura Congress) on the method of representation of the Indian states being a democratic one and approximating to that of the provinces. Approximation must mean a very near approach and not merely a show or dummy democracy. It must also mean civil liberty for without it there is no democracy.

He has further made clear in his letters and otherwise that even this, by itself, is not enough as reserved subjects and special powers cannot be accepted by us. But he has added that he hopes that it will be easier for these questions to be settled if the other major issues are decided in accordance with our wishes.

That, as I understand it, is Gandhiji's position. But it is desirable



for him and the Working Committee to consider it in all its implications and to know exactly where we stand.

As I understand it, it resolves itself into this: We are convinced that there can be no settlement of the Indian problem except on our anti-imperialist basis and with full self-determination through a constituent assembly. Only then, as equal and independent units, can India and England deal with each other and come to an understanding about their mutual relations and contacts. Till this is done our relations will have a continuing background of hostility, and conflict will be ever present, latent if not always aggressively apparent. This background has been clearly brought out in Gandhiji's article in the *Harijan* on the C.P. affair.<sup>3</sup>

In the event of this settlement not coming, our position is to examine everything with a view to determining whether a certain course of action strengthens us or not. If the former, we may adopt it and thus carry on without an aggressive conflict but keeping in view the possibility of this.

In regard to the federation, according to Gandhiji, we might avoid conflict and strengthen ourselves if certain things were done. These by themselves are not satisfactory but the alternative of conflict will not be worthwhile at this stage if these things are done.

These particular developments are as stated above. They involve an entirely different approach to the problem from that so far adopted by the British Government. This different approach means in the first instance the recognition of self-determination and the favouring of a constitution through a real constituent assembly. Thus the Government of India Act becomes a transitory measure which has to be replaced as rapidly as possible by another of our making.

3. Mahatma Gandhi wrote in the *Harijan* of 6 August 1938: "Of course, the Governor's action conformed to the letter of the law, but it killed the spirit of the tacit compact between the British Government and the Congress.... The indisputable facts led one to the irresistible conclusion that the Governor, in his eagerness to discredit the Congress, kept a vigil and brought about a situation which he knew was to be uncomfortable for the Congress. The unwritten compact between the British Government and the Congress is a gentleman's agreement in which both are expected to play the game.... In accepting the resignation of Dr. Khare and his two colleagues, in demanding resignations from the other three Ministers, in expecting an immediate answer, in summarily rejecting their explanation and dismissing them.... the Governor betrayed a haste which I can only call indecent."

If this is the background then the other steps for the transitory period are in regard to the federation:

- (i) Democratic elections in the states as in the provinces and civil liberty.
- (ii) Reserved subjects to remain no longer reserved.
- (iii) Special powers not to be exercised.

On this basis the federation can be discussed as a transitory measure. In addition, it is clear that much more specific guarantees about the non-interference of Governors or Viceroy in provincial governments should be demanded. Thus it should be laid down that Governors should function purely as constitutional heads and must not preside over cabinet meetings or interfere with the ministers' discretion.

As all this is for the transition period, steps have also to be taken for the ending of this period within a short time so as to bring into being the new constitution of India's making.

It is on this basis alone that I can envisage even a temporary understanding. A far better course, of course, is for the British Government to scrap the Government of India Act and federation and proceed right away with the self-determination plan. But if that is not to be for the present, we might agree to the other course suggested above, though it has its dangers, as the British Government is notoriously capable of turning and twisting its words and assurances, and not playing fair. Therefore we must be careful not to be satisfied with any vague understandings or assurances which can bear two interpretations. We must have definite and unequivocal language and it has to be in writing.

Another matter has to be borne in mind. It is not for us to put forward any proposals. We can and must only stress full self-determination. If the British Government has any proposals to make, it is for it to advance them. We may accept them in goodwill, or be just prepared to work them in hostility, or reject them utterly and, if necessary, be prepared for a conflict. This attitude of ours will be reflected, of course, in our reactions to the international situation.

It is quite possible that the British Government might decide to hold over federation for another year or two. Indeed there is a probability of this. They might make a brave statement of going ahead with federation but in effect allow matters to drift. I do not think this tactics can be accepted by us as it means a continuation of the present unsatisfactory position. In such an event, we must insist on our full demand for self-determination, and, at the same time, refuse to submit any longer to a continuation of the Governor's interference with provincial administration. He must not preside over cabinet meetings and



abide by the ministers' decisions in everything. To allow the present position to continue to drift is entirely wrong.

I have tried to analyse the situation and its possibilities and suggested what, in my opinion, is the lowest we can go to. Anything less than that would be definitely harmful and wholly out of keeping with the needs of the situation. Personally, I think that the only right solution is full self-determination and any intermediate stage is a waste of time and introduces complications. I distrust the British Government entirely, and its policy towards Spain and Czechoslovakia makes me sick with disgust. This is a good measure of its policy towards us and therefore we cannot ignore it in considering our own position in India. A government which can function in this way has sunk to almost the lowest depths of reaction, and I should not like India to have anything to do with such a government.

By the time this note reaches India the present European crisis may have worsened or eased off. Probably it will ease off. That of course does not mean that the crisis is over. It will only have been postponed. Europe is dominated by gangsterism today, and so long as this continues, crisis after crisis will come, and sometime or other there will be catastrophe.

It is my intention to go to Geneva next week for a few days in order to meet some people there. I should like an early reply on the matters referred to in my notes for my own enlightenment and guidance. Also I want to know what the Working Committee has decided about Nahas Pasha's invitation.

## 55. India's Objectives<sup>1</sup>

It is necessary, if the problem of Indian graduates' unemployment is to be tackled in a satisfactory way, that advantage be taken of the need for complete social reorganisation of Indian life.

1. Interview to the *Daily Worker* on 6 September 1938, published on 7 September 1938.

As reported in yesterday's *Daily Worker*, the Indian graduates of British universities have little prospect of suitable employment, and the government feels it can offer no solution to the problem.

An efficient reorganisation of social services poses serious difficulties. The Congress is however doing valuable work in this field, though checked by the British Government, which keeps the administration of the country in its stranglehold.

India has been crying for such schemes which will make the life of people more tolerable, and there are schemes which would give employment to large numbers of Indians.

Sanitation and general public health schemes are a dire necessity, and by putting such schemes into effect the problem can be satisfactorily solved.

The only real method of dealing with the problem is along the lines of complete and widespread reorganisation of Indian life.

Recent British foreign policy has demonstrated by its continuous pro-Nazi and fascist bias in central Europe and Spain that the British Government has moved far from the democratic and peace-loving outlook of the world. And it has also shown how impossible it is for the people of India to cooperate with it. We realise, however, that today there are strong forces in Britain which are exceedingly dissatisfied with British foreign policy. While we stand for democracy in Czechoslovakia, it is obvious that our primary concern is the establishment of democracy in India, which can come only by India's being an independent nation and by the ending of British imperialism.

For us, the people of India, all questions—whether national or international—must be judged by this standard. India, though still subject to British imperialism, has already developed a certain international status. The voice of her people counts in international councils and is listened to with respect.

This is not only because of the strength of our national movement today but also because of our realisation that the future is with us. A free India is bound to play an important part in international affairs. Today, we speak in foreign countries with a measure of authority and do not go about begging querulously for anybody's favours. We extend our hand of friendship to those who stand for our ideals of peace and democracy and are opposed to imperialism and fascism and do not show favour to the forces and powers that are reactionary and anti-democratic.

In the world today no individual or nation can remain a passive spectator to the conflict between the two opposite forces, unless that individual or nation does not wish to count in world affairs.



India and her people have no intention of playing a passive role in the world when vital issues are at stake, which affect not only the world at large but their own freedom. We do not want to be ignored. Those people who object to our taking an active part in international affairs have not understood the world of today due to lack of vision and understanding. Today, it is impossible to separate the fate of any one nation from the fate of other nations. World problems—political, economic and social—cross the boundaries of nations. No country's problems can today be understood and much less solved by treating them in isolation from the problems facing other countries. Even for understanding the Indian problem one has to understand the world problem. To solve it, it becomes essential to throw the weight of India on the side of the right solution of other world problems, too. If we ignore this larger aspect, we ignore it at our peril.

If war comes, it would be totally absurd for anyone to suggest that India should put up with what happens and be a shuttlecock to be pushed about by the British Government. If we are not prepared to tolerate that, as we are not, then we must understand the events that are leading to war or peace today. We must follow not the policies that aim at war and the suppression of people but the policies that aim at freedom and the release of the people's energies.

In these conflicts between the rival forces, it sometimes becomes necessary for us to take definite sides. We cannot remain quiet when evil triumphs or endeavours to triumph. In the case of Spain it seems to me for reasons not only of international policy but our own national policy that it is dangerous for us to have to face a victory achieved by Germany and Italy. It further seems to me that no decent or sensible person can submit passively and quietly to what has been done in Spain by General Franco and his supporters. There are certain things which cannot be tolerated. This applies to China also. From every point of view—national and international—for the sake of our own freedom in India and from the point of view of decency and public morality, it is quite impossible for us to remain neutral in the face of Japanese aggression and wanton frightfulness perpetrated over China.

We do not increase our strength or our dignity among the nations, nor do we advance our own cause by sitting on the fence when vital matters are in dispute. I am glad therefore that the Indian National Congress and the people of India have thrown their full weight on the side of the struggle for freedom, peace and democracy wherever it occurs. I can only conclude that those who are opposed to this are attracted by the Nazi or fascist gospel or by the Nazi or fascist policy and they want

to give scope to it to grow in India. Fortunately, there are few such persons in India.

I am very glad that a number of Indian delegates attended the World Youth Congress in New York.<sup>2</sup> From all accounts that have reached me I am glad that they played an effective part in the deliberations of the Congress, thus serving the cause of world peace as well as the cause of Indian freedom. Our younger generations show signs of shaping well and we must welcome this because it is on their shoulders that the burden of the progress of India will be cast. While intensely conscious of Indian problems—political and economic—and passionately desirous of seeing India becoming independent, and her appalling poverty liquidated, they see these problems in a world perspective. They are not oppressed by the sense of long subjection of the older generation. They can feel and breathe the air of freedom, and so when they speak, their voice carries weight and enhances the prestige of India.

I find that some criticisms have been made about this World Youth Congress. The South African Government apparently refused passports to some delegates on the ground that the Congress was a communist gathering, while some organisations, including the Independent Labour Party of Britain, called it a congress of war and not a peace congress. Both these criticisms seem to me totally absurd. The World Youth Congress, from all accounts that are available, was an extraordinarily representative organisation of the youth from all over the world, comprising all shades of opinion, except the fascist and the Nazi variety. There were political organisations represented, so were economic, social, cultural and religious. The Congress was welcomed by top representatives of the American Government. It is true that there were communist delegates too and they were welcomed just as non-communists were welcomed. Very wisely the Congress wanted to work on the basis of achieving broadest peace in the world.

It is well known that the Communist Party today is one of the strongest forces in favour of world peace and its earnestness and capacity for action of many of its members are undoubted. Only those who secretly or publicly favour or wish to encourage fascism and Nazism can be opposed to cooperation with communists and others of their way of thinking in the cause of peace. To call the World Youth Congress, which was a gathering of such representatives of the youth drawn from all over the world who feel intensely interested in peace, a war congress shows an amazing confusion of thought. Peace cannot be established in the

2. Five hundred delegates from fifty four countries including India took part in this Congress held in August 1938.



world by merely praying for it or by waiting for it. We have to meet organised onslaughts on it by powers of reaction, and the only way to meet these onslaughts is to organise for peace, by bringing together all groups of peoples who are interested in peace and freedom. A complete answer to the argument of the *Manchester Guardian* that the Congress Working Committee was not justified in censuring the Governor of the Central Provinces for the part he played in the recent crisis in that province has been given by Gandhiji in his article in the *Harijan* dealing with the Central Provinces affairs. Nothing need be added to this. The point of difference fundamentally is this. The *Manchester Guardian* seems to imagine that all is settled down in India and a democratic form of government is functioning. The reality is very far from this. Nothing is settled down in India and our conflict against British imperialism continues and will continue till it is eliminated from India. The partial democracy that we have in the provinces is hedged in and restricted on all sides. The Governor is very far from being a constitutional Governor, the Viceroy is still much of an autocrat and all the old paraphernalia of the British Government continues in India untouched and unchanged.

The central government has not been affected in the slightest bit by the changes made in the provinces, and it continues to speak in hectoring and aggressive language in total disregard of the people of India. So the old conflict continues though it may apparently be toned down now and then. We have to function in terms of that conflict and to prepare and strengthen ourselves for it. When India is an independent democratic state, then it will be time enough for the *Manchester Guardian* to think of democratic procedure in India. Till then it is essential that the Indian national movement should exercise the strictest control over the different provincial governments and develop a uniform policy there, specially in relation to the conflict against British imperialism. A reference to the Congress resolution on office acceptance should make this clear to those who do not know it already.<sup>3</sup> It is on those terms and with a view ultimately to get rid of the Government of India Act and hasten independence of India that we fashion our policy.

The recent happenings in Travancore<sup>4</sup> are very significant. I do not know much about the background of recent events there but it is obvious that the freedom movement there has grown considerably and

3. See *Selected Works*, Vol. 8, p. 69.

4. Several persons were killed as a result of firing in Travancore state at a meeting organised as part of the civil disobedience campaign launched by the state Congress on 26 August 1938 for defying prohibitory orders.

the state authorities are trying to control it ruthlessly. The Indian states are caught in a ditch and foolishly they imagine that they can stem the tide of nationalism by guns and ordinances.

If British imperialism with all its might has failed to do that in India, it is absurd to imagine that the feudal or semi-feudal Indian states can succeed. The Congress has deliberately tried to avoid hostilities with the states' authorities in the hope that peaceful compromises will be arrived at. The Congress, of course, stands for responsible government in the Indian states and for a united and free India including the states. The Congress must, therefore, sympathise with all the people in the states who desire independence and freedom. In spite of this ardent sympathy, the Congress has tried by all means in its power to work for a peaceful solution. It will no doubt still continue to work for that solution. But the rulers and the ministers of some of the states are apparently taking the bit into their mouth.

Perhaps this will hasten the solution of the problem. It will draw the attention of the whole of India and of other countries to these curious places in India called the Indian states where mediaeval conditions flourish and civil liberty is hardly known. Travancore is a state which has been considered as one of the most advanced in India—educationally and otherwise. If such events can occur there, it can well be imagined what the conditions in other states would be. It is time that this problem of the Indian states was faced and solved and this absurdity ended in India. While one deplores the tragedies that have been enacted in Travancore, one is also thankful to the Travancore Government for thus forcing the pace and inevitably bringing the final liquidation of the present Indian states system much nearer.

## 56. The Betrayal of Czechoslovakia<sup>1</sup>

Sir,

As an Indian, intensely interested in Indian independence and world peace, I have followed recent developments in Czechoslovakia and Spain with anxious interest. For some years past the Indian National Congress has criticised and dissociated itself from British foreign policy, which has seemed to us consistently reactionary and anti-democratic, and

1. Letter to the editor, *Manchester Guardian*, London, 8 September 1938. Reprinted in *The Unity of India*, (London, 1941), pp. 284-287.



an encouragement to fascist and Nazi aggression.<sup>2</sup> Manchuria, Palestine, Abyssinia, Spain agitated the people of India. In Manchuria the foundations were laid for encouraging triumphant aggression, all covenants and rules of international law were ignored, and the League of Nations sabotaged.<sup>3</sup> With all our sympathy and goodwill for the Jews in their distress in the face of fierce and inhuman persecution in Europe, we considered the struggle in Palestine as essentially a national struggle for freedom which was suppressed by violence by British imperialism in order to control the route to India. In Abyssinia there was a gross betrayal of a brave people. In Spain little was left undone in order to harass the republic and encourage the insurgents. Having decided that the Spanish Government should lose, or was going to lose, the British Government tried in a variety of ways to hasten the desired end—and even insult, injury and gross humiliation by the insurgents were endured.

The fact that everywhere this policy has been a disastrous failure has not and does not discourage the British Government from continuing to pursue it. The consequences of the rape of Manchuria we see all around us in the world today. The problem of Palestine grows worse from day to day and violence counters violence and the government uses ever-increasing military forces and coercion in an attempt to subdue a people. It is not always remembered that the problem is largely the creation of the British Government and it must shoulder the responsibility for much that has happened. Abyssinia, as your correspondent points out, still remains unconquered and is likely to remain so. In Spain a heroic people have refused to fall in with the wishes of the British Government and have demonstrated that they will not be and cannot be crushed or subdued.

It is a remarkable record of failure. And yet the government of Great Britain is not capable of learning from it and mending its ways. It pursues even more intensively its policy of encouraging aggression and giving support to General Franco and the fascist and the Nazi powers. No doubt it will carry on in this way if allowed to do so, till it puts an end to itself as well as the British Empire, for overriding every other consideration are its own class sympathies and leanings towards fascism. That would certainly be a service it will render, howsoever unwittingly, to the world, and I would be the last person to object to an ending of imperialism. But I am deeply concerned with the prospect of world

2. Britain had persuaded France to join her in an effort to induce Czechoslovakia to transfer to Germany all territories where more than 50 per cent of the population was German-speaking.

3. See *Selected Works*, Vol. 6, p. 15.



war and it distresses me exceedingly to realise how British foreign policy is directly leading to war. It is true that Herr Hitler has the last and determining word in this matter but Herr Hitler's decision itself will largely depend on the British attitude. This attitude has so far done everything to encourage him and to bully and threaten Czechoslovakia. So if war comes, the British Government can have the satisfaction or otherwise of feeling that they were largely responsible for it, and the people of Britain, who have put this government in power, can draw what comfort they can from this fact.

I had thought that nothing that this government did could surprise me (unless it suddenly turned progressive and worked for peace). But I was mistaken. Recent developments in Czechoslovakia and the way the British Government, directly and through its mediators, has baulked and threatened the Czech Government at every turn has produced a feeling of nausea in me, and I have wondered exceedingly how any Englishman with any trace of liberal instincts or decency could tolerate this. I have wondered still more how those who talk so loudly of peace could have supported, actively or passively, this obvious invitation to war.

Recently, I spent some time in Czechoslovakia and came in contact with numerous people, both Czech and German. I returned full of admiration for the admirable temper of the Czech people and the democratic Germans who, in face of grave danger and unexampled bullying, kept calm and cheerful, eager to do everything to preserve peace, and yet fully determined to keep their independence. As events have shown they are prepared to go to extraordinary length to satisfy every minority claim and preserve peace but everybody knows that the question at issue is not a minority one. If it was the love of minority rights that moved people why do we not hear of the German minority in Italy or the minority in Poland? The question is one of power politics and the Nazi desire to break up the Czecho-Soviet alliance,<sup>4</sup> to put an end to the democratic state in central Europe, to reach the Rumanian oil fields and wheat, and thus to dominate Europe. British policy has encouraged this and tried to weaken that democratic state.

In any event, we in India want no fascism or imperialism and we are more convinced than ever that both are closely akin and dangers to world peace and freedom. India resents British foreign policy and will be no party to it, and we shall endeavour with all our strength to sever the

4. By the Soviet-Czech treaty of May 1935, each country was committed to join France in aiding the other state if it were attacked. But during the Czech crisis of 1938 neither France nor the U.S.S.R. came to the assistance of Czechoslovakia.





AT VICTORIA STATION, LONDON, 23 JUNE 1938



WITH LEADERS OF THE BRITISH LABOUR PARTY, JULY 1938

L TO R : JAWAHARLAL NEHRU, C.R. ATTLEE, UNKNOWN, R.H.S. CROSSMAN,  
A. BEVAN, HAROLD LASKI AND STAFFORD CRIPPS



bond that unites us to this pillar of reaction. The British Government has given us the final and unanswerable argument for complete independence.

All our sympathies are with Czechoslovakia. If war comes, the British people, in spite of their pro-fascist government, will inevitably be dragged into war. But, even then, how will this government, with its openly expressed sympathies for fascist and Nazi aggression or a like government, advance the cause of democracy and freedom? So long as this government endures, fascism will always be at the doorstep.

The people of India have no intention of submitting to any foreign decision on war. They alone can decide and certainly they will not accept the dictates of the British Government which they distrust utterly. India would willingly throw her entire weight on the side of democracy and freedom but we heard these words often enough twenty years ago and more. Only free and democratic countries can help in freedom and democracy elsewhere. If Britain is on the side of democracy then its first task is to eliminate empire from India. That is the sequence of events in Indian eyes and to that sequence the people of India will adhere.

Yours, etc.,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

## 57. Message to the British Communist Party Congress<sup>1</sup>

I offer my greetings and good wishes to the Congress of the Communist Party of Great Britain.<sup>2</sup> It is not necessary for one to be a communist to do so, for in these grave times when unimagined perils face us and catastrophe threatens to overwhelm the world, party labels must lose their narrow significance and our actions must be governed by larger considerations. These larger considerations are the maintenance of peace and democracy, their extension, and their establishment on a firm basis of freedom. Fascist aggression has already brought war and frightfulness to Spain and China and threatens to extend these to the whole of Europe. The forces of democracy and progress must hold together and cooperate

1. London, 13 September 1938. *The Bombay Chronicle*, 17 September 1938.

2. Held at Birmingham on 16 September 1938.

to meet this menace. The foreign policy of the Soviet Union has been one of the strongest pillars of peace in the world and there is no doubt that if there was cooperation in this policy by other powers, peace would become unassailable. The British Government, however, pursues a different policy and one which has in the past and in the present encouraged fascist aggression and thus brought war nearer. To this policy the people of India are entirely opposed. In India we stand and struggle for our national independence, but because of that we are equally interested in the great world struggle between fascism and anti-fascism, and all our sympathies are with the latter. A free India will throw her entire weight on the side of democracy. A subject India, denied freedom and democracy, will resist decisions imposed upon her by British imperialism. Therefore both the interests of the hundreds of millions of India and of the world struggle demand the ending of imperialism and the establishment of a free democratic state.

**58. To J. B. Kripalani<sup>1</sup>**

London  
Sept. 15, 1938

My dear Jivat,

Your letter of the 9th September has just come.<sup>2</sup> I am sorry I am not with you all to share your burdens. If I had felt that I could really be more useful in India I would not have come to Europe at all. But I had no such feeling then and I decided to come here. It was my intention to return in October but I was always prepared to cut short my visit here if my presence was required at home. Of course, if I had been there, I would have been busy enough and could have done many jobs. But I wanted very much to freshen my mind and to be away for a while from our day to day domestic troubles. The world is moving very fast, for good or ill, and I do feel that we ignore this largely and hence do not see our own problems in proper perspective.

1. A.I.C.C. File No. 71/1938, p. 3, N.M.M.L.

2. He wrote to Jawaharlal that the Congress Working Committee would discuss the question of Congress attitude to war in the light of the passing of a bill penalizing propaganda against recruitment, and the Muslim League's support of it.



In your letter you say that Vallabhbhai wants me to return by air for the A.I.C.C. meeting. I am afraid this is almost physically impossible now unless I started today or at the latest tomorrow. And then I would arrive on the eve of the meeting. I doubt if that would be worthwhile in any event. Just at present it is not easy for me to leave Indu although she is progressing. Vijayalakshmi also feels rather lost without me. I was thinking therefore of remaining here for some weeks more. I have given up the idea of going to Russia or anywhere else. That would anyhow be difficult in the present international situation.

I am going to Geneva tomorrow for a few days. Much depends on whether war comes or not. It seems to be on the threshold.

Indu is in a nursing home and is expected to remain there for another two or three weeks. After that she will be required to spend six weeks recuperating in some health resort. She ought to be normal then. My intention is to see her well on the way to normality and then to return to India. This means my reaching India about the end of October. But everything is in a melting pot and it is difficult to fix programmes.

There is one matter which I should like you to mention to Subhas. I wrote to him and Raja about it some time back. A great part of the money collected here for our China fund was in the form of cheques in favour of individuals. Later, we found that the banks would not even collect or deposit these cheques unless someone had authority to deal with this fund here. All that we wanted to do with this money was to collect it and send it on to India, except for a small balance for contingent expenses. I suggested that Krishna Menon, who had done the organising part here, might be authorised to deal with this fund, to realise this money and send it on. But as no authority has so far come, the cheques remain uncashed and I fear they are on the point of lapsing. Perhaps if the authority came soon, they might not lapse. If they lapse, you know how difficult it will be to get fresh cheques.

Love,

Yours affly.,  
Jawahar

59. The Crisis in Europe<sup>1</sup>

In an ever-shifting situation, which changes from hour to hour, it is difficult to write, for what one writes today may be out of date tomorrow. The whole of Europe is tense and terribly anxious; people wait for developments with a fever of excitement. Is it going to be war or peace? Is Nazi and fascist aggression to continue, or will the gigantic bluff be called? Will Czechoslovakia be betrayed by the British and French Governments? The next few days will show, but whether there is war or peace, the people of India must understand the inner meaning of events and the forces that are shaping them. Those forces will continue to work, often secretly and behind closed doors, whether the present outcome is apparent peace or war.

In India there have been no illusions in the past about British foreign policy and the Congress has repeatedly described this as a pro-fascist policy. In spite of high-sounding phrases about freedom and democracy and collective security, the British Government has consistently sided with the forces that are attempting to crush democracy. Abyssinia was betrayed, Spain is a living witness of Britain's partiality for fascism. If fascism and Nazism have not wholly triumphed, it is not because the British Government have done or left undone anything. It is because the victims of aggression have refused to submit or commit suicide.

Today history seems to be repeating itself in Czechoslovakia and the British and French Governments seem to be on the verge of betraying that country which has been the citadel of democracy in central Europe. Whether that betrayal will take place or not will depend on the power of public opinion in Britain and France to check it.

We have no illusions about the present British and French Governments. And yet few among us could imagine the lengths to which these governments have gone in their support of Nazism and fascism. Why has this been so? We must understand this, realise what is in store for us, and shape our policy accordingly.

In view of the great importance of international affairs at the present juncture, the *National Herald* will make a special feature of them. We hope to give articles by experts dealing with the various aspects of the crisis which envelops Europe and the world and which threatens to

1. London, 18 September 1938. *National Herald*, 26 September 1938.



engulf us. The importance of this to us and to our struggle for freedom is obvious and the time is rapidly approaching when India will have to develop a foreign policy in keeping with our own objectives and needs and with our desire to help in establishing world peace based on freedom. The Haripura Congress has already given a lead in this direction, and a healthy and informed public opinion is essential for this development.

It is the good fortune of the readers of the *National Herald* that we have secured a series of articles on the crisis in Europe from a distinguished authority on international affairs,<sup>2</sup> the first of which appears in this issue. These articles, originally written for a Labour weekly in England, are primarily addressed to the British labour movement.

But the Indian national movement can equally profit by them and I would commend them to the earnest attention and study of all Congressmen. For, essentially, all forces and movements in favour of freedom and democracy have to face similar problems in the world. They have not only to resist open fascist aggression but also the more insidious, and therefore the more dangerous, policies of the present British and French Governments, which in the name of democracy are helping to crush democracy. Ashamed of their own misdeeds, each government tries to cast the blame on the other. In reality, both are afraid of the forces of democracy, and therefore encourage Nazism and fascism, hoping that these will make the world safe for their ruling classes.

It is possible that the people of these countries, who have been deluded so often by their governments, will yet compel them to change their policy. It may be that the courage and determination of the people of Czechoslovakia will check the betrayal of their country by those who have posed as their friends. The next few days will show.

Whatever the future may bring, India has to be prepared for it, and this preparation involves a clear appreciation of events. I hope that this series of special articles by an authority on the subject will help in bringing this appreciation.

60. The Munich Crisis<sup>1</sup>

Lac Lemane, the lake of Geneva, how peaceful and beautiful it looks! Steamers puff away towards Lausanne carrying tourists and sightseers. A huge jet of water seems to come out of the lake itself and rises high into the sky. In the background, Mount Saleve dominates the city of Geneva, and further back still rise the snowy peaks of Mont Blanc. Hotels line the quayside with the flags of many nations fluttering in the breeze. Huge autobuses loaded with tourists dash down the streets.

Further up there is the Palais Wilson, the old home of the League of Nations. A little beyond is the solid pile of the International Labour Office, and further still rises in all its aggressive and massive grandeur the brand new Palace of the League.

But the beauty and the peace of the lake and the city attract little notice; for one thought fills the minds of all. What does Czechoslovakia say? What is happening in London? What in Paris, in Prague, in New York? People ask each other for the latest news, and rumour and conjecture have a happy field. Depression reigns supreme. The League assembly is sitting, but who cares for it? Geneva does not count, the League is dead. Prague counts and London, Paris, Moscow and, of course, the mountain retreat of Hitler. The Palace of the League looks like a mausoleum built to honour the dead body of peace and collective security. While Europe quivers with excitement and hovers between peace and war, the League assembly does not even refer to the vital issue.

Is it peace or war? What answer have the Czechs given? The British and French Governments have betrayed Czechoslovakia and thrown her to the Nazi wolves. Will the British and French people submit tamely to this treachery?

The Rumanian delegate says in a loud voice, in the hearing of a group of French delegates, "Czechoslovakia will live, it is France that dies." The Frenchmen get red in the face.

Monsieur Blum<sup>2</sup> is reported to have said that he is torn between conflicting emotions—his overmastering desire to have peace and his shame

1. Geneva, 20 September 1938. *National Herald*, 28 September 1938. Reprinted in *China, Spain and the War*, (Allahabad, 1940), pp. 97-102.
2. Leon Blum (1872-1950); French socialist leader; Prime Minister of a popular front government, 1936-37; arrested by Vichy government and imprisoned in Germany, 1942-45; Prime Minister again in 1946-47.



at what is being done. "Very good of you, Monsieur Blum," says another Frenchman, "but we are not interested in your psychological reactions. We are interested in democracy, in Czechoslovakia."

Message from London. The Czech Government has accepted the Hitler-Chamberlain-Daladier<sup>3</sup> proposals<sup>4</sup> in principle. Depression. But someone says this is all British propaganda.

Another message. The British labour movement has denounced the Chamberlain policy and is meeting the C.G.T. (the French Labour Confederation) tomorrow to devise a common plan of action. Bravo!

News from Prague. The cabinet is still sitting. It has sat all night. No decision has been reached yet.

Message from Berlin. There has been a clash between Germans and Czechs near the frontier. Another message, vast concentrations of German troops on the Czech frontier.

An English delegate to the League tries to justify his government's policy. It is very distressing, very painful, but there was no other way out. Hitler was on the point of marching into Czechoslovakia. His air force was ready to bomb Prague. Something had to be done and Chamberlain bravely did it. It is true that this means sabotaging democracy and the League and betraying the Czechs. But peace at least is preserved. For how long? And is it after all preserved? What if Hitler demanded a British colony under threat of war? Would not Britain fight then? Of course. So that the possession of a colony was far more important to the British Government than democracy and the League Covenant and solemn promises and assurances, and the fate of gallant Czechoslovakia.

Telephone from New York. There has been a great protest meeting condemning the betrayal of the Czechs. Good. But the Americans protest only from a high moral plane. Will they do anything else?

Someone says that the surest way for a country to commit suicide is to seek the friendship and protection of England and France. These governments are sure to play false and betray.

3. Edouard Daladier (1884-1970); French politician; member, Radical Socialist Party for many years; Prime Minister and Minister for National Defence, 1938-40; arrested in September 1940 and deported to Germany; freed by Allies, 1945; member, National Assembly of France, 1946-48.
4. According to these proposals Czechoslovakia was to cede to Germany such territory where more than half the population was Sudeten German. The area was to be determined by an international commission and jointly guaranteed by Britain, France and Germany. Those areas where Germans were in a minority were to receive extensive rights of self-government.

The Russian delegates look grim. The Czechs are too unhappy to say anything. The Spaniards are not lacking in words. "We know all this, we have had experience of this", they say. "We relied on our stout right arms and we shall win through and save democracy."

What is the latest news? What is happening? Newspapermen rush about telephoning to Prague, London, Paris, and rumours fly bringing a measure of depression or elation in turn. The Czechs will never give in—the Czechs have surrendered. But, no. Benes<sup>5</sup> is a clever man and he will not allow himself to be caught. If the Czech Government surrenders, it will fall immediately and give place to another. Hitler demands the resignation of Benes.

Midnight. Cafe Bavaria, the haunt of diplomats and journalists. A foreign minister is there and crowds of delegates to the League, and editors, journalists and many hangers-on of the League. Beer and coffee are consumed and there is continuous talk and argument. Behind it all a tension, even hard-boiled journalists showing nerves.

What has Prague decided? What of London and Paris? Resentment rising in London. In Paris the Chamber of Deputies is meeting tomorrow. The French Government may fall. Already a new Premier is mentioned. In London Parliament is meeting. Labour is getting aggressive. Tempers are going up everywhere, although newspapers keep the soft pedal on.

Telephones ringing continuously. Hello Prague! Hello Paris! What is the latest news? Is it war or peace?

News from Prague. The government has invoked the treaty of Locarno<sup>6</sup> and claim arbitration under its terms. Germany had agreed to this and Hitler subsequently had confirmed it.

Bravol! Clever step. Benes is no fool. He has put the British and the French Governments in a hole. What will they say to this? What will Hitler say? A Swedish delegate says that he was one of the arbitrators appointed in Locarno.

Chamberlain to go to Hitler again day after tomorrow. He is becoming quite good at carrying messages by air. Perhaps his little tea-party will not come off after all.

Hello Prague? Hello Paris? Hello London? Is it peace or war? and so to September 21, 1938. Is it peace or war?

5. Eduard Benes (1884-1948); Czech statesman; Foreign Minister, 1918-35; President, 1935-38; headed the Czech Government in exile in London; elected President of Czechoslovakia in June 1946 but resigned on 7 June 1948.
6. The Locarno Treaty of 1925 between Britain, France, Germany and Italy guaranteed the existing Franco-German frontiers and Germany recognized France's title to Alsace-Lorraine.



## 61. The Great Betrayal<sup>1</sup>

"We have been abandoned, betrayed", cried a vast multitude of the Czechoslovakian people in their agony. News had come that their cabinet, after nearly forty eight hours of almost continuous sitting, had decided to accept the Anglo-French ultimatum,<sup>2</sup> and a hundred thousand citizens of the city of Prague poured out into its streets, sorrowful beyond words, tasting the dregs of humiliation. Only a few days before, when war appeared inevitable, and danger and death faced them, they were high-spirited, full of courage and determination. Even the thought that their beautiful and much-loved city of Prague might be reduced to dust and ashes did not deter them from their grim resolve to fight and, if necessary, die for their freedom. But now? What can one do with a stab in the back? What can one say when the assassin is one whom one has counted as a friend?

They wept, these hundred thousand proud men and women, and in the bitterness of their hearts they prayed to heaven to punish France for her treachery and England for her betrayal. "Our best friends have deserted us", they cried, "and today we stand alone not only against our enemies but against these friends of ours."

For months they had quietly submitted to the bullying of Lord Runciman's mission,<sup>3</sup> and behind it of the British and French Governments. Step by step they had accepted Lord Runciman's proposals, they had swallowed every bitter pill, hoping that when crisis came these governments would stand by them. They had even finally agreed to the full plan drawn up by Runciman at the instigation, no doubt, of the British Government. Still the dagger-thrust came from these friendly governments and betrayal in time of need, such as history, with all its dark record of treachery, cannot show.

1. Signed article written at Paris, 22 September 1938. *National Herald*, 1 October 1938.
2. Under the pressure exerted by Britain and France, the Czech Government accepted on 21 September 1938 the Anglo-French plan to cede to Germany the areas inhabited by Sudeten Germans.
3. A number of concessions were made to the Sudeten Germans by the Czech Government in August-September 1938 on the advice of Lord Runciman who was sent to Prague as "standing adviser" by the British Government.

The multitudes still fill the streets of Prague; the shops are closed, the factories do not work. A year ago, to a day, they had marched in the funeral procession of Masaryk,<sup>4</sup> their liberator. Within a few days they were going to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the republic. But fate and the treachery of their 'friends' had brought this death blow to them and they reeled at the shock.

And yet behind all their sorrow there is still determination. 'We are alone', they cry, 'let us be strong. Czechoslovakia shall live!'

The last few days have been dramatic enough to suit the most jaded appetite. But the play is not ended. Mr. Chamberlain and the British and French Governments have not brought peace to the world, but have unloosed passions which will have full play in the days to come. War could have been stopped and stopped for long if these governments had really wished it by their building a peace front against the Nazi aggression. But they preferred to side with the Nazis and the fascists and thus made sure of war tomorrow, if not today—a tomorrow when friendless and despised they will look in vain for sympathy and help. For the reputations of these governments is mud today. Many an Englishman proclaims loudly that he is ashamed of being English when such things happen; many a Frenchman hangs his head in shame.

What of us in India? We have long experience of promises broken and betrayals by the British Government. Yet it is well that this new experience has come to us also, lest we forget. None so poor today as would care to have the friendship of England or France, for open enemies are safer and better than dangerous friends who betray. To rely on the friendship or protection of these is to invite disaster. Let India learn this lesson again well and not be swayed away by soft words and promises meant to be broken. Let India cut herself away from this connection with Britain which makes her a sharer in dishonour and betrayal. We must rely on ourselves alone and on our own strength and so achieve independence.

4. Thomas Masaryk (1850-1937); first President of the Czechoslovak Republic, 1918-35.



## 62. On the Brink<sup>1</sup>

History marches on in Europe with terrific strides and every hour brings news of fresh developments. Mr. Chamberlain's visits to Berchtesgaden and Godesberg have not ended the crisis or pushed war into the far distance.<sup>2</sup> War still hovers in the air and may descend on us at any moment. But Mr. Chamberlain's new role as Herr Hitler's messenger-boy has thrown a flood of light on the true significance of British foreign policy and the way this has consistently helped fascist aims.

Whatever the outcome of the agony of today might be, it is clear that the future is going to be one of continuous conflict between the rival forces of progress and reaction. The British Government, under Mr. Chamberlain's guidance, have thrown their weight entirely on the fascist side, but the people of Britain have still to be reckoned with, and the last four days have opened their eyes to the terrible reality. They are realising, as the people of France are realising, that with all the betrayal and treachery of their governments, with all the shame and dishonour that has come to them, the price may not be peace after all.

The Indian people will have to take vital decisions in the days to come and it is necessary that they should understand the true inwardness of this crisis. We have seen during the past year or more how Britain has indirectly sought to help the rebels in Spain. We now see how Britain openly and explicitly helps the Nazi government, even at the cost of weakening herself in Europe and the world. Why is this so?

It is clear that if there is war in Europe, it will come through the aggression of Nazi Germany. From no other quarter can war begin.

It has also been clear that if a powerful peace front was created against Nazi or fascist aggression, this war could be checked and peace ensured. This peace front could have consisted of the Soviet Union, France, England, and Czechoslovakia with the goodwill of the United States of America. To this peace front would have inevitably gravitated Poland, Rumania and some of the lesser powers. It would have been an overwhelming combination against Germany and Italy (if Italy

1. Signed article written at Paris, 22 September 1938. *National Herald*, 5 October 1938.
2. Chamberlain visited Germany, authorised to settle by the Czechoslovak Government and with a French power of attorney. He hoped to conclude with Hitler arrangements arising out of the Czechoslovak acceptance of the Anglo-French plan.

joined Germany, which was by no means certain). If this had happened, it would have been madness on the part of the Nazi government to play the part of the aggressor and peace would have been assured.

This straight and obvious policy, inevitably leading to peace, was not to the liking of the British Government, for it meant cooperation with the Soviet Union. It meant the strengthening of the Soviet Union and releasing of popular forces all over the world. The class sympathies of the British Government made them view the Soviet Union with horror and inclined them towards Nazism and fascism. And so although they talked of democracy and peace, they pursued a policy of appeasement of fascism and thus directly led to war.

Chamberlain is at Berchtesgaden. What further infamy, what greater betrayal is afoot? Incredible, unbelievable things have already happened and one's capacity for astonishment is already past. A British Prime Minister functions as an emissary of Hitler and fascism and works for fascist domination over Europe. A French Foreign Minister, M. Bonnet,<sup>3</sup> goes even a step further and actively works for the destruction of his ally, Czechoslovakia, for the greater glorification of Hitler. Patriotism, nationalism, peace are mouthed by all these gentlemen, but the object in view is the triumph of Hitler. Suddenly, as if by a flash of lightning, the true motives of the statesmen are lighted up.

The ruling classes, the top dogs have no use for freedom or democracy. They fear both and they see in Hitler the champion of reaction, who, though hard and difficult to tolerate, is infinitely better than real democracy. They forget conveniently that Hitler aims at the destruction of France and the complete domination of Europe. They forget that Czechoslovakia is the sole rampart of democracy in Europe. If that goes, France also goes. What does it matter provided the class interests of M. Bonnet and Mr. Chamberlain are safe? We see how class feelings are the final criteria in meeting a crisis.

Frenchmen and Englishmen hang their heads in shame. Stupefied at the rapid turn of events, with not only dishonour but ultimate destruction of their proud countries facing them, Chamberlain and Bonnet send their ultimatum to the Czechs. Accept Hitler's demands, or we also will range ourselves against you. Note this: it was not only an abandonment of an ally and friend, it was also a threat of supporting the enemy. In torment and agony of spirit the Czech cabinet sits continuously for nearly forty eight hours. Chamberlain gets very angry at

3. Georges-Etienne Bonnet (1889-1973); French Foreign Minister, 1938-39, and one of the authors of the Munich agreement, 1938; member, Chamber of Deputies, 1956-68.



the delay in the answer and his minister and the French minister keep on calling on the Czech ministers throughout the night ever adding to their threats. The Czech Government surrenders.

How shall we describe this? The perfect description has been given by someone. It was the rape of Czechoslovakia by Germany with England and France holding her forcibly down!

Parliaments are not consulted. They are not even called. Chamberlain says that it would be inconvenient to call it while delicate negotiations are going on. In France, meetings and demonstrations are forbidden. We have the fascist methods developing in England and France.

Englishmen say that they are ashamed of being English. In France, the news of one deed spreads like a flash and brings some pride to a disillusioned people. A French general, serving on a French military mission in Prague, declares that the betrayal of the Czechs by his country has disgusted him so much that he renounces his French citizenship and swears he will never return to France.<sup>4</sup> Henceforth, he considers himself a Czech citizen. Strange that this act of renouncing French citizenship, because he thought it a dishonour, should fill with pride large numbers of Frenchmen! They were proud that one brave Frenchman had said frankly what he thought and braved the consequences.

Chamberlain is meeting Hitler. Meanwhile the masses stir and strange rumblings are heard in France and Britain. They had been fooled long enough by these ministers and governments of theirs. Yet their predicament is a hard one. They least of all want war. It is they and their sons and brothers and husbands who will die, and their children and wives and mothers and sisters who will be bombed. What are they to do?

All this could have been stopped so easily if England and France and Russia had stood together in the cause of peace. But Chamberlain and Bonnet prefer Hitler.

News from Berchtesgaden. Chamberlain is not meeting Hitler this afternoon as arranged. Is it the break? Is it war? The strain grows and grim serious faces pour over the latest editions of the newspapers in the cafes.

Further news. There has been an exchange of letters between Chamberlain and Hitler. They will meet again. But behind it all the

4. It was reported on 23 September 1938 that General Faucher, chief of the French military mission to Czechoslovakia, had sent his resignation to the French Government and placed his services at the disposal of the Czech armies.

agony of suspense. What further betrayals? What devil's plot is being hatched on the banks of the Rhine?

The masses are stirring. Enough of this betrayal and truckling to fascism. In spite of the government ban at every factory gate, the workers demonstrate, and then march to the Czechoslovakian legation to show their sympathy. Troops and military police in evidence everywhere. Why? Not against the enemy but to overawe the French people. There are minor clashes.

### 63. The Struggle of Czechoslovakia<sup>1</sup>

I met Reuter's man early in my stay in Prague and told him that I could not express any opinion about the particular problems affecting minorities without much more study, but that it was obvious that in Czechoslovakia the question of minorities was a mere excuse. The real problem was one of German expansion towards the east and practically breaking the independence of Czechoslovakia. It was a problem of power politics and thus an international one. Our sympathies were entirely with the Czechoslovakian Government and we were opposed to the Nazi aims. We felt that it was very important for a democratic country like Czechoslovakia not to be weakened in any way.

I also admired greatly the calm and determined attitude of the Czechoslovak people and democratic Germans in the face of this great crisis. The Nazi attitude was one of pure bullying and it was astonishing how this bullying was being supported by the British Government through the Runciman mission and otherwise.

As for the war, if this occurred, our sympathies would inevitably be with Czechoslovakia, but I added that we were not prepared for England to exploit India for her imperialist purposes. It was a little absurd for England to talk of democracy and to deny that to India.

I gave several interviews to Czechoslovak and German papers in Prague. Naturally, it was not easy for me as a visitor to give advice to any party or make criticism. That would have been improper, but I

1. Letter to T.K. Menon of the Indo-Czechoslovak Society, Bombay; extracts published in *National Herald*, 24 September 1938. The full text is not available.



made it quite clear that the Indian sympathies were entirely with Czechoslovakia and against the aggressors who were trying to bully her.

#### 64. Cable to A.I.C.C.<sup>1</sup>

London  
25 Sept. 1938

Urgent necessity official Congress statement.<sup>2</sup> Definite India's attitude international crisis. Also suggest office issuing instructions for guidance Congressmen.

Nehru

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-71/1938, p. 20, N.M.M.L.
2. The A.I.C.C., at its session at Delhi on 24-26 September 1938, resolved that "in the event of war breaking out in Europe, the A.I.C.C. delegates its powers to the Working Committee to deal with the situation as it arises from time to time in the light of the Haripura resolution on foreign policy and war danger."

#### 65. The Betrayal of Czechoslovakia<sup>1</sup>

We have passed through incredible days, when every hour brought fresh news of betrayal and humiliation for the British and French people, yet in spite of all this war approaches. We must understand the inner meaning of events and realize how the British and French Governments

1. Statement to the press, London, 26 September 1938. *The Hindustan Times*, 27 September 1938.

have gone to unheard of lengths in order to placate the vaunting ambition of Germany's dictator. Fundamentally this is as in Spain because of the fascist character of the British Government. The one way of assuring peace by forming a peace bloc in cooperation with the U.S.S.R. and France, they have rejected, preferring the friendship of the fascist powers, and have paid a price in the most shameful betrayal in history. And even that price is not sufficient to stop war from coming. We will no doubt hear a great deal about democracy, but we have seen how far the British Government cares for democracy and we should beware of assurances, which are only meant to be broken.

With war coming, all our sympathy will be for Czechoslovakia, whose people have behaved with courage and dignity and raised themselves in the eyes of the world. We would gladly do all we can to help them but it must be clearly understood that we are not going to be pawns in imperialist adventures, nor are we prepared to help the governments which will betray democracy whenever they have a chance to do so. It is we who will decide, not the British Government, and our decision will depend not on promises but on definite action which takes us to our goal.

It is pitiful and absurd for the Indian princes to shout out their loyalty and promise to fight for democracy.<sup>2</sup> It is scandalous that they should crush their own subjects denying democracy, yet talk tall what they will do abroad. The high commissioner for India in London,<sup>3</sup> forgetting his own business, has also made some astonishing remarks in Quebec. Whom he speaks for I don't know. It is most objectionable that he should abuse his position and carry on British propaganda.

2. For example, the Maharaja of Bikaner wired to the Viceroy on 16 September 1938: "I can conceive of no greater mistake being made by anyone in India, Europe or elsewhere than to imagine that the Princes of India will not again rally round their gracious emperor on this occasion."
3. Feroze Khan Noon, high commissioner for India in London, interviewed by Reuter on 19 September 1938 in Quebec, said: "I am certain that never again will Britain engage in an aggressive war, and since seven provinces where there are Congress ministries out of 11 provinces in India are already cooperating with Britain and all the Congress ministries have sworn allegiance to the crown, it is reasonable to conclude that any misunderstanding still left between the Congress and Britain will disappear with proper cooperation and personal contacts in the sphere of administration and Britain will receive the united support of India."



## 66. London in Suspense<sup>1</sup>

After the mysterious happenings behind the scenes of the past few weeks, the journeying to and fro, the appeals and the ultimatums, the mounting danger of war, Mr. Neville Chamberlain at last was to make a public pronouncement. He spoke through the radio and I listened in to his broadcast.<sup>2</sup> It was brief, hardly lasting eight minutes, and there was nothing that was new in what he said. It was an appeal to sentiment after the Baldwin manner, but lacking the Baldwin touch and personality. It struck me as singularly ineffective. There was no reference to the vital issues at stake, to the naked sword that was being flashed before the world terrorizing humanity, to the way of violence that was becoming the law of nations and which Mr. Chamberlain himself had been encouraging by his activities. There was hardly a mention of the proud and gallant nation that was being offered as a sacrifice to the blood lust of the beasts of prey that surrounded it. The reference to it was a disparaging one—"a far-away country of whose people we know nothing."<sup>3</sup> No hint at the dignity and courage, the love of peace and freedom, the calm determination and tremendous sacrifices of these far-away people, who had been coerced and abandoned so faithlessly by their friends. Nothing was said of the incessant threats and insults and lies that had flown unceasingly from Nazi quarters. Only a brief, apologetic reference to Herr Hitler's "unreasonableness."

1. London, 28 September 1938. Published as "Day by Day" in *National Herald*, 7 October 1938. Reprinted in *The Unity of India*, (London, 1941), pp. 288-293.
2. In a broadcast on 27 September 1938, Chamberlain had said: "After my first visit to Berchtesgaden I did get the assent of the Czech Government to proposals which gave the substance of what Herr Hitler wanted, and I was taken completely by surprise when I got back to Germany and found that he insisted that the territory should be handed over to him immediately, and immediately occupied by German troops without previous arrangements for safeguarding the people within the territory who were not Germans, or did not want to join the German Reich. I must say that I find this attitude unreasonable."
3. Chamberlain had also said: "How horrible, fantastic, incredible it is that we should be digging trenches and trying on gas-masks here because of a quarrel in a far-away country between people of whom we know nothing. It seems still more impossible that a quarrel which has already been settled in principle should be the subject of war."

I felt depressed and my heart was heavy within me. Was virtue always to be treated so, unless it was accompanied by a big battalion? Was evil ever to triumph?

I thought that perhaps Mr. Chamberlain would do greater justice to his theme the next day in Parliament. Perhaps, at last, he would give credit where it was due, and speak the truth without fear of Herr Hitler. Zero hour was approaching; it was time that the truth was out. But at the back of my mind I did not believe this for Mr. Chamberlain's past stood up before me and was witness to his partiality for fascism and its works.

Meanwhile there was a digging of trenches in the parks and open spaces, and anti-aircraft guns were being mounted. A.R.P.—air-raid precautions—stared at us from every hoarding, and in innumerable improvised depots men and women tried on gas masks—true emblems in all their ugliness of this savage age of violence. People went about their businesses, but their faces were strained and full of apprehension. There was sorrow in many homes as their loved ones were summoned to put themselves in readiness for the coming war.

The hours slipped by and brought the dreaded moment nearer, when, at the mad bidding of one man, millions of inoffensive, kindly, and well-meaning men would rush at each other and kill and destroy. The guns would thunder and belch out fire, and the whirr of the bombing aeroplanes would fill the sky. Zero hour. Would it be tomorrow or the day after?

Would this world of the twenty-eighth of September, nineteen thirty eight ever be like this again?

Once more we hear the word  
That sickened earth of old:  
"No law except the sword  
Unsheathed and uncontrolled."

I am pressed by people to get a gas mask. The idea seems ridiculous to me. Am I to go about with a snout and the appearance of a beast? I am not adverse to risk and danger and a few days in Barcelona gave me some taste of air raids. I do not believe in the efficacy of gas masks and if danger comes, the mask will be poor protection. Perhaps its main purpose is to give confidence to the wearer and keep up public morale. No one knows how he will function face to face with extreme danger, yet I imagine that I shall not easily lose my head.

Still, the curiosity to see a gas mask at close quarters overcomes me, and I decide to go to one of the A.R.P. depots. I am fitted and later fetch a gas mask.



President Roosevelt has sent another message<sup>3</sup> to Herr Hitler—a dignified, moving appeal in which the real point at issue is stressed. What a vast difference between what he says and how he says it and Mr. Neville Chamberlain's pronouncements! Even the printed word of President Roosevelt shows that there is a man behind it. What does reason matter or fear of consequences to Hitler? Is Hitler absolutely mad that he should risk his astonishing diplomatic victory, obtained, no doubt, under threat of violence, by plunging into war? Does he not know that defeat and disaster will certainly be his lot in a world war; that many of his own people will turn against him? Or perhaps he has taken the true measure of Mr. Chamberlain and M. Daladier and knows exactly how far they can go.

The streets leading to the Houses of Parliament are crowded and there is excitement in the air. Inside the House every space is occupied and the visitors' galleries are overfull. The Lords are present in full force. They look a very bourgeois crowd indistinguishable from humbler mortals. There sits Lord Baldwin next to the Duke of Kent.<sup>4</sup> On the other side of him are Lord Halifax and the Archbishop of Canterbury. The diplomats' gallery is crowded. The Russian *charge d'affaires* is there and the Czechoslovakian minister, Monsieur Masaryk,<sup>5</sup> son of a famous father who built up the Czechoslovakian nation. Is the son going to see the destruction of the noble edifice that the father erected?

The Prime Minister begins. He has not a striking appearance; there is no nobility in his countenance. He looks too much like a businessman. His delivery is fair. For an hour he speaks, a bald narrative with

3. President Roosevelt on 27 September 1938 had said: "...for the sake of humanity everywhere, I most earnestly appeal to you not to break off negotiations, looking to a peaceful, fair, and constructive settlement of the questions at issue. I earnestly repeat that so long as negotiations continue, differences may be reconciled. Once they are broken off, reason is banished and force produces no solution for the good of humanity."

In his second appeal on 28 September, Roosevelt said: "The question before the world today, Mr. Chancellor, is not a question of errors of judgment or of injustices committed in the past. It is a question of the fate of the world, today and tomorrow...my appeal was solely that negotiations should be continued until a peaceful settlement was found and that thereby a resort to force be avoided..."

4. George, Duke of Kent (1902-1942); the youngest son of King George V.  
5. Jan Masaryk (1886-1948); Czech diplomat and politician; represented his country in Washington and London; Foreign Minister of the Czech Government in exile in London, 1940; Deputy Prime Minister, 1941-45; returned to Czechoslovakia in May 1945 and remained in the foreign ministry till February 1948.

occasional personal touches and words that give a glimpse of suppressed excitement. Somehow I feel (or is it my imagination?) that the man was not big enough for the task he undertook, and this complex comes out repeatedly in his words and manner. He is excited and proud about his personal intervention, his talks with Hitler, the part he is playing in world affairs. Though Prime Minister of Britain, he is not used to these high tasks, and the intoxication of the adventure fills him. A Palmerston or a Gladstone or a Disraeli would have risen to the occasion. A Campbell-Bannerman would have put some fire in what he said. A Baldwin might have gripped the House, so would Churchill in a different way. Even Asquith would have spoken with a dignity suited to the occasion. But there was neither warmth nor depth of intellect in what Mr. Chamberlain said. It was very evident that he was not a man of destiny.

My thoughts flew to his meeting with Hitler, and I thought how overwhelmed he must have been by Hitler, overwhelmed not only by the frequent ultimatums of the latter, but by the dynamic and passionate and somewhat neurotic personality. For Hitler, for all his evil bent and distorted intent, has something elemental about him and Mr. Chamberlain is of the earth, earthy. But even Mr. Chamberlain could have met that elemental force with another force, also elemental but far more powerful, the force of organized democracy, the will of millions of people. He did not possess that power, nor did he seek to possess it. He moved in his narrow sphere and thought in limited terms, and never tried to develop or represent the urge that moves millions. It was inevitable, under the circumstances, that in the clash of wills he must go down before Hitler.

But was there even a clash of wills? There was no hint of such real clash in what Mr. Chamberlain said, as there had been none in his deeds. He approached Hitler with sympathy and a large measure of approval and agreement. There was no talk of high principles, of freedom, of democracy, of human right and justice, of international law and morality, of the barbarity of the way of the sword, of the sickening lies and vulgarity of the high priests of Nazism, of the unparalleled coercion of minorities in Germany, of refusal to submit to blackmail and bullying. On principles there was hardly any dispute, only some details were discussed. It is evident that Mr. Chamberlain's outlook, allowing for his English environment, was not so different from Hitler's.

In that long speech of his there was much in praise of Hitler, of his sincerity, of belief in his *bona fides*, of his promise not to seek further territory in Europe. There was no mention of President Roosevelt and



his striking messages. There was no mention of Russia, although Russia is intimately concerned with the fate of Czechoslovakia.

And what of Czechoslovakia herself? There was mention of course, but not a word about the unparalleled sacrifices of her people, of their astonishing restraint and dignity in face of intolerable provocation, of their holding aloft the banner of democracy. It was an astonishing and significant omission, deliberately made.

Mr. Chamberlain's speech held his audience. Not because of the excellence of the argument or the personality of the speaker, but because of the vital importance of the subject. He led up to a dramatic conclusion. He was going to Munich tomorrow and so were Signor Mussolini and M. Daladier.<sup>6</sup> And as a great favour Hitler had made a striking concession—he would defer mobilisation for twenty four hours!

Mr. Chamberlain succeeded in rousing the House by this element of drama and by the hope it brought of the possible avoidance of war. The strain of the last few days lessened and relief appeared in all the faces.

It was good that war had been pushed off, even though this might be only for a day or two longer. It was terrible to contemplate that war, and any relief from it was welcome.

And yet, and yet, what of Czechoslovakia, what of democracy and freedom? Was there going to be another betrayal again, the final murder of that nation? This sinister gathering of four at Munich, was it the prelude to the four-power pact of fascism-cum-imperialism to isolate Russia, to end Spain finally and to crush all progressive elements? Mr. Chamberlain's past record inevitably makes one think so.

So tomorrow Chamberlain meets Hitler and Mussolini. One was too much for him, what will be his fate with these two strong men? Perhaps Mr. Chamberlain and Monsieur Daladier will, under cover of intricate words, agree to everything that Hitler says, and then, as another of his great favours, Hitler will consent to postpone war by a few days or weeks. That will indeed be a great triumph and Hitler ought to be hailed then as the prophet of peace. The Nobel Peace Prize might still be awarded to him, though Mr. Chamberlain will be a hot competitor.

6. Chamberlain's speech was interrupted by the delivery of a letter from Hitler inviting Chamberlain to a four-power conference in Munich. He announced his acceptance of the invitation and Parliament was adjourned to enable him to prepare for his third visit to Germany.

**67. The Choice Before Us<sup>1</sup>**

In this grave hour when the fates of nations hang in the balance and world war threatens humanity, the people of India cannot remain passive spectators of the march of historic events. They stand to gain or lose from them, as do others, and they have to decide how best to serve the cause of freedom that is dear to them. To wait on others to decide for them, or not to decide at all, is to prove unworthy of our historic destiny. All the peoples of the world desire peace, but individuals and those in power and authority are driving the world to terrible war even though they talk glibly of peace. The people of India are even more committed to the way of peace than other peoples.

The Congress has clearly laid down the principle which must govern our action in times of world crisis and war. By those principles we must stand. But the time is fast approaching for the application of those principles in the light of events and recent developments. A negative attitude of protest or the mere enunciation of a principle is not enough when a positive policy and constructive action become necessary. Our movement long ago passed the stage of protest in our national affairs and we took to constructive action. In foreign affairs also we are passing that purely agitational stage and India's voice counts today and is listened to with attention in international gatherings. It becomes essential, therefore, that we should fashion our policy accordingly and link our national struggle with that policy.

Striving for national freedom, we have inevitably become anti-imperialists and have resisted not only foreign domination in India, but imperialism itself. We saw in fascism a development of and a more dangerous form of imperialism, and we condemned it. We looked upon the two as twin brothers which crushed freedom and prevented peace and progress. We realised that the conflict between fascism and imperialism on the one side and freedom and democracy on the other was world-wide, and gradually we ranged ourselves with the forces of progress and freedom. In Abyssinia, Spain and China we condemned imperialist and fascist aggression.

1. Signed article written at London, 29 September 1938. *National Herald*, 6 October 1938. Reprinted in *The Unity of India*, (London, 1941), pp. 294-300.



Fascism crushed all progressive elements and set up new standards in cruelty and inhumanity. It gloried in brutality and openly aimed at war. Imperialist powers talked in terms of democracy but aided and abetted fascism and helped it to grow. International morality decayed, all idea of collective action for peace was given up, and an unabashed gangsterism among nations grew up and was tolerated. Yet it was clear that only by collective action could the aggressor be stayed and peace maintained. A surrender to violence and aggression was no basis for peace, for the aggression and blackmail grew by every surrender and brought world war ever nearer. It was not difficult for this aggression to be checked and peace ensured if those powers who believed in peace acted together, for their strength was far greater than that of the fascist aggressor. But many of these very powers who talked of peace and democracy were imperialist and they sympathised with fascism and encouraged it.

The British Government has a special responsibility for the growth of fascism and thus for bringing war nearer. They tolerated aggression in Manchuria, took part in the betrayal of Abyssinia, and indirectly aided the fascist rebels in Spain. Their general policy was one of consistently encouraging fascism and Nazism. They did not succeed in Spain because the people of Spain refused to fall in with their wishes and fought with unsurpassed courage and determination for their freedom.

In Czechoslovakia the incredible happenings of the past few weeks have shown to what depths the British and French Governments can sink in their desire to increase the power and prestige of Nazi Germany at the cost of the destruction of democracy in central Europe and the coercion and dismemberment of a gallant and friendly state which had put faith in their word. This act of gross betrayal and dishonour did not even bring peace, but has brought us to the threshold of war. Yet peace was to be had for the asking by building up a joint peace front between England, France and Russia and other powers, which would have been too powerful for Nazi Germany to dare to challenge. The British Government refused to line up with Russia and made Hitler believe that he could deal with Czechoslovakia singly, with England and other powers looking on. They ignored Russia in all their negotiations and worked in alliance with Hitler for the crushing of Czechoslovakia. They preferred the risk of making Hitler dominant in Europe to co-operation with Russia in the cause of peace. Their class feelings and hatred of the new order in Russia were so great that everything else was subordinated to it. They gladly agreed, at the bidding of Hitler, to the termination of the alliance between Russia and Czechoslovakia and thus sought to isolate Russia. The next obvious step was a four-power pact

between England, France, Germany and Italy, an alliance between imperialism and fascism in order to make the world safe for reaction and for the crushing of the progressive elements all over the world. But the overweening ambition of Hitler has come in their way and an outraged public opinion has cried halt. They have talked of peace, but have deliberately avoided the obvious way to peace, and every step they have taken has been an encouragement to Hitler to wage war.

They have arrived at the precipice from which, perhaps, retreat may be impossible, and yet there is not even now a marked change in their pro-fascist policy. If war comes they will talk of democracy, but if they continue as governments they will still act in the imperialist-fascist way and betray that very democracy if they have the chance to do so. No one who has followed their activities in the past can doubt this or rely on them.

And yet, whether there is war or peace, the fate of Czechoslovakia is a vital matter to the world and to all who stand for democracy and freedom. The momentous struggle between fascism and anti-fascism is being and will be fought on this issue and the result of it must have far-reaching consequences. India must be vitally interested in it for it affects her own future. We cannot tolerate the defeat of democracy and the world domination of fascist-imperialism. Britain, perhaps preserving the outward forms of democracy, would then turn more definitely fascist; France may do likewise. If this grave danger threatens then no people or individuals can be neutrals or onlookers, and we have to cast our full weight on the side of democracy, serving thereby the cause of our own freedom. Not to do so might help fascism and reaction.

Governments have power to shape a country's policy and to give it a right or wrong turn. But in moments of crisis, of war, and potential war, popular forces emerge and grow and make a vital difference. They change governments or compel them to act in a certain way. It is these progressive forces that we see growing up around us, and if the crisis develops into war or otherwise, they will grow all the more. We have to reckon with these forces, to welcome them and to cooperate with them. It is fear of these that has prevented the British Government from co-operating with the Soviet Union in ensuring peace and has made them seek alliance with the Nazis even at the cost of weakening their empire.

Yet there are obvious dangers with an imperialist and reactionary government exploiting for its own purposes in war-time the slogan of democracy. Do we not have even now Hitler and Mussolini giving their approval to the principle of self-determination, choosing to forget what they have done and are doing to many of their own people? Have we forgotten the fine phrases and slogans used by the British Government



during the last war? Obviously we cannot be taken in by phrases again and allow ourselves to be exploited for imperialist purposes. We cannot be parties to the horror and disillusion of the last war.

It is true that this very memory of the past will cling to us and be a constant reminder to us of what we should not do. It is true also that there is a greater realisation of the issue today, a vaster mass consciousness, a greater vigilance among the people. The existence of the Soviet Union itself and the astonishing fight for democracy in Spain are significant. And yet who can say that vast numbers of people will not be misled again and their courage and sacrifice and idealism not exploited for base ends, leaving after the holocaust of war the same misery, the same injustices, imperialism and fascism?

How to avoid this terrible danger and yet how not to be a mere spectator when the most vital issues are at stake? It is a question most difficult to answer for every person who cares for freedom and democracy and world peace and order. For us in India the difficulty is no less. We sympathise with all our heart with Czechoslovakia in her struggle for freedom, we realise the world significance of it, the momentous consequences which flow from it. We want to help her in her struggle to the best of our ability, for thereby we help the cause of freedom and democracy throughout the world. We want to combat fascism. But we will not permit ourselves to be exploited by imperialism, we will not have war imposed upon us by outside authority, we will not sacrifice to preserve the old injustices or to maintain an order that is based on them. We will not and cannot forget our own struggle for freedom. Slogans which may sound pleasant to the ear but have little reality behind them, or vague promises which have been broken often before, cannot determine our course of action. Will anyone dare to ask us to fight for democracy and deny us that democracy?

It is a terrible predicament and a difficult question to answer. Yet the answer must be given, and given in clear language. The Congress, in its resolutions, has already clearly indicated what this answer must be. We have to amplify this and apply it, in terms of constructive statesmanship, to the needs of the hour.

Whether there is war or a so-called peace which is continuous conflict and a herald to war, we must be clear what we are aiming at and fight for that. We must not permit vague slogans or what are termed military necessities to take away such liberties as we possess and to divert us from our objective. We must have no imperialist settlement at the end, but the liquidation of imperialism itself. We must have a real league of nations controlling armaments and air services, and collective

security based on freedom and social justice. And those who have the conduct of war or peace must be people who believe in these objectives.

If I were an Englishman I would not trust the present British Government in war or peace, and I would not like to commit myself to their care to be used and exploited as they wish. Their talk of peace and democracy has been pure bluff. They could have ensured peace by cooperating with France, the Soviet Union, and the United States of America, and as for democracy, they have done their utmost to slay it in central Europe. I would demand that this government must go. So long as it remains I would fear betrayal.

But as an Indian I must confine myself to India. It is time that the problem of our independence was faced and settled finally. We have had enough delay, and if every group of people are considered worthy of self-determination, the three hundred and seventy millions of India have waited long enough for it. There is no other way of settling this question except by recognition of our right to independence, and through a constituent assembly. The proposed federation is dead; let there be no further talk of it. We have bigger questions to decide, vaster problems to settle, and the sooner we set about them the better. More and more people, even in England, have come to realise that it is both good politics and good sense to have a friendly and free India by their side rather than a hostile India ever giving trouble and weakening them in times of crisis. As a prelude to the new age of freedom and democracy, for which we work and for which we may have to fight, India must have the full sense of freedom.

But we are in the midst of a crisis, and intricate schemes cannot be evolved in a day. What can be done without delay? India's right to independence must be recognised, as also the fact that her constitution will be drawn up by a constituent assembly elected by adult franchise. A committee consisting of representatives of the people should be set up to work out the details for the election of this assembly. And immediate steps should be taken for the transitional period so that a popular direction is given to affairs. With this background, questions of trade and economic relations between India and England will be considered in a friendly spirit, and I have no doubt that India will seek to do justice to all just interests of the British people in India.

An India with her freedom assured to her, and working for the establishment of a democratic state, will be a pillar of strength to freedom and democracy elsewhere, and will throw in her weight and resources, in war or peace, for the defence of democracy. She will most willingly join forces in the defence of Czechoslovakia, to combat fascism, to work for a settlement to do away with the injustices of the past and the present



and lay the foundation of a true world order. Then India and England, if England also pursues the paths of freedom and justice, will cooperate together for peace and the good of humanity.

## 68. It is not Peace<sup>1</sup>

Of all the peoples of the world, none is better able to understand and sympathise with the feelings of the Czechoslovakian nation than the masses of India. India has followed this tragic drama of betrayal with intense interest.

From long experience her people have learned not to trust the promises of the British Government, and yet recent developments in British foreign policy have amazed and shocked them.

Apart from the final dramatic statement, Chamberlain's speech in Parliament was more remarkable for what it left unsaid than for what it said. Except for his perfectly right insistence on peace, his talk said nothing about the high principles and policies involved or about the international right and morality or about the maintenance of democracy.

Czechoslovakia is to be sacrificed, the Soviet Union isolated, and a clear field left for Nazi expansion, despite Hitler's promises towards the south-east of Europe.

Mussolini will no doubt ask for his pound of flesh in Spain and elsewhere, and Chamberlain and Daladier might, in the name of peace, agree to this gift.

Peace at any price—at the price of the blood and suffering of others, the humiliation of democracy, and the dismemberment of friendly nations.

Even so it is not peace, but continuous conflict, blackmail—the rule of violence, and ultimately war.

The British Government has been repeatedly talking about self-determination and even Hitler and Mussolini were laying stress on it. So are the people of India. Three hundred and seventy millions of them want this self-determination and independence. The people of the Indian states from Travancore to Kashmir are also struggling for their freedom but are being ruthlessly suppressed.

1. Talk with the correspondent of the *Daily Worker*, London, 30 September 1938, printed on 1 October 1938.

69. To G. B. Pant<sup>1</sup>

London  
October 1, 1938

My dear Pantji,

I received your cable some time back. It has not been possible for me to do anything in the matter of experts owing to the critical international situation. I shall make further inquiries before I return to India. I have already sent you particulars of some Austrian refugees and I shall send you more information within a few days.

I feel, however, that the outlook of the United Provinces Government is somewhat different from mine. I do not attach much importance to odd people knowing something about particular industries, big or small. What I am keen on is to have men with some vision, as well as expert economic, technical and engineering knowledge, who can survey the whole problem and then suggest a plan for development. I fear the schemes of the United Provinces Government in regard to industrial or rural development are lacking in any vision or plan. Under present conditions this planless method will lead to no results. However, if a competent man is available for a particular industry, there is no reason why we should not have him.

During my stay in Geneva I had long talks with some of the League of Nations people who have been intimately associated with work in China. The League, as you know, has given great help to China in building up its industrial, financial and other sides. I wanted to know how far it was possible for this to be done in India, either formally through the League channels or informally by getting people directly at their suggestion. Of course, if you deal with the League formally you will have to go through the Government of India. I do not suppose the Government of India will veto any such approach, but it is sure to put difficulties in the way. Everything would depend on the kind of persons sent by the League and it would be necessary for us to fix upon these persons privately before a formal approach is made.

These League advisers could come for a few months to survey the problems and give advice, especially in regard to rural development, as well as industrial and economic matters, or one or two persons could come for a couple of years. It is possible that in the former case the League might bear the expenses. It takes a lot of money from India and there is no reason why it should not do something for India.

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.



In the event of a League official or someone recommended by them coming for a longer period, he would have to be paid. These rates of payment are less than the usual official rates in India. Probably you would have to pay between 1,000 and 1,500 rupees a month.

I am myself inclined to think that you should try to get the League to send a small commission which could survey the problems and give advice.

Further we might find out informally one or two really competent men, experts in agricultural and rural organisation, and, if possible, employ them privately for a period.

I also saw John G. Winant,<sup>2</sup> the new American director of the International Labour Office. I was favourably impressed by him. He is very keen on doing something for India and is perfectly willing to send a couple of men to survey labour as well as agricultural problems and give advice. Presumably the I.L.O. will bear the cost. I attach more importance to Winant's offer than to the League of Nations people. I suppose even in this case you will have to deal with them through the Government of India, but in any event we should fix up things privately with Winant and only then approach the Government of India.

The League people have also suggested that you might send a medical officer to Geneva for training. He could function as a temporary member of the health section for a year.

I am sending you this information so that you may consider it with your colleagues before I return. When I come back we can discuss these matters more fully and take such steps as you consider desirable.

I am eager to return to India, but am held up somewhat by Indira's ill-health, as well as my sister's. Both of them require looking after and I do not wish to leave them until everything is fixed up. Still I hope to return towards the end of this month.

Yours affectionately,  
Jawaharlal

2. (1889-1947); director, International Labour Office, Geneva, 1938-41; U.S. ambassador to Britain, 1941-46.

## 70. To Abul Kalam Azad<sup>1</sup>

London  
October 1, 1938

My dear Maulana,

I have not written to you since I came here, but I have sent several letters and reports to the Working Committee, which no doubt you must have seen. I have been following, as far as I could, developments in India. You have had a lot of trouble and the burden on you must have been great.

As you know I have been meeting Nahas Pasha and trying to develop contacts with the Wafdist movement. Nahas Pasha is very keen on this and I hope that good will result from our efforts.

I conveyed his invitation to the Congress to send representatives to the Wafdist congress on November 23rd. I think it is highly important that we should send some representatives—at least two, a Hindu and a Muslim. I cannot think of a better representative than you. I might mention that Nahas Pasha specially suggested to me that one of our representatives should be a Muslim. I do hope that the Working Committee will decide soon about it and will communicate its decision directly to Nahas Pasha.

Perhaps you would write to him direct, not only about this congress but about other affairs also. I am sure he would be delighted to receive a letter in Arabic from you.

I am enclosing a copy of a letter<sup>2</sup> I am sending to Nahas Pasha. This will give you some idea of the talks we have had.

You will notice the reference to the Arab congress to be held on November 7th. I do not know what the position is in regard to this in India and whether the Muslim League or the Jamiat are sending delegates. What I have said in my letter to Nahas is based on information received in London. It would be worthwhile your finding out how matters stand in India and writing to Nahas Pasha about it.

Perhaps also you might inform Mufti Kifayatullah<sup>3</sup> and others of the Jamiat as to the true character of this congress, which is probably being run to some extent under British influence, although in regard to Palestine it will no doubt criticise British policy. Anyway it is anti-Wafdist.

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-71/1938, p. 16, N.M.M.L.

2. See the next item.

3. (1872-1952); a prominent leader of the Jamiat-ul-Ulema-i-Hind.



I am eager to get back to India, but for some time I am rather tied up because of my sister's and daughter's ill health. I hope to decide in the course of the next week or ten days.

I hope you are keeping well.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal

## 71. To Nahas Pasha<sup>1</sup>

London  
October 1, 1938

My dear Nahas Pasha,

It was a great pleasure and privilege to meet you again and have a long talk with you. I found that there was so much in common between us and our respective national movements that it would be to the great advantage of both of us to cooperate with each other as far as we can.

I recapitulate below the various points that we discussed.

1. We should organise a weekly exchange of a news-letter between the Indian National Congress and the Wafd Party. These letters to contain news of the political movement as well as economic, social and cultural news.

2. We should exchange our publications.

3. We should try to send delegates to our respective congresses and at other suitable times. Thus I hope that it will be possible for the Indian National Congress to send fraternal delegates to the Wafd congress in November, and I am happy to know from you that representatives of the Wafd will visit India early next year. Their visit will fit in with our annual session of the Congress in February or March.

4. I suggested to you also that we might develop contacts through certain international organisations, with whose objectives we agree. This would give us an opportunity to study international affairs and to influence them to some extent. This does not mean that we should commit ourselves to particular policies in regard to our own countries or our

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-71-1938, pp. 16(b-f), N.M.M.L.

own national movements, but it would help us to some extent if we associated ourselves with progressive movements in the world. Our national problems are so much a part of the international problem that it is difficult to study them separately. Obviously our principal concern must be the freedom of our countries, but in working for this objective international contacts will be helpful.

I mentioned to you the affiliation of the Indian National Congress with the R.U.P. (*Rassemblement Universel pour la Paix*). We associated ourselves with this organisation because we believe in world peace and freedom, but we made it clear that peace, in our opinion, can only be established on a basis of freedom and anti-imperialism—imperialism, like fascism, being itself a negation of peace or freedom. We have consistently pressed this attitude in the R.U.P. We are represented on the R.U.P. executive by a member nominated by our organisation.

I would suggest that to begin with you might acquaint yourselves with the activities of the R.U.P. and develop informal contacts with it, without any formal commitment on your part. Later, you can judge for yourselves what is the best course for you to adopt. In the event of the R.U.P. having international conferences it might be desirable for a fraternal delegate or an observer to be sent by the Wafd. In this way you would come in contact with many organisations and individuals whose cooperation would be useful. You would also bring the question of Egypt before them, as well as problems affecting the Arab world, more especially Palestine, and all this could be done without any formal commitment on your part.

I understand that M. Jacob represents the R.U.P. in Cairo. You are acquainted with him and he will, no doubt, supply you with all necessary information.

5. I also suggested to you the desirability of youth organisations in Egypt getting into touch with international youth organisations, in particular with the World Youth Congress. This is an important body and its influence is a growing one in a large number of countries. I am sure they will welcome the association of Egyptian youth with them.

I would also like your youth organisations to get into direct touch with Indian youth organisations. Wherever possible delegates might be sent to youth congresses, either national or international.

6. All of us in India are greatly interested in the problem of Palestine. It is difficult for us to have direct contacts with the people of Palestine. We would like, therefore, to keep in touch with the situation there through your party. This would help us greatly. We would therefore welcome news of Palestine in your weekly news-letters.



Our general attitude in regard to Palestine has been this. We have looked upon the struggle in Palestine as a struggle for national freedom and not as a religious or racial struggle. It is an anti-imperialist struggle of the Arab people. At the same time we realise that the Jews have been grossly ill-treated in Europe and we have a great deal of sympathy for them, but this sympathy does not mean that they should allow themselves to be used as tools of British imperialism in Palestine, as they have done and are doing. Certainly they have certain rights there, which should be protected, and they can help as useful citizens in building up Palestine, but the essential thing is that Palestine is an Arab country and should achieve freedom as such, with Jewish rights protected. We feel that the only way out of the present difficulty is by means of an agreement between the Arabs and the Jews on the above basis and without any interference by British imperialism.

I understand that there are many Arabs and some Jews who accept this basis and who would gladly cooperate together. I have no doubt that you can exercise a powerful influence in this direction.

7. In India, unfortunately, some difficulties occasionally arise between certain groups of Mussulmans and others. It is our earnest desire to remove every grievance and to build up a unified nation in which every group and community and individual has full and equal rights. We have the example before us of what you have been able to achieve in Egypt. I am glad to say that we have built up a powerful platform of unity in India and among our most noted leaders and colleagues there are many Muslims. Still some elements in the community, for political or other reasons, have opposed the national movement. I have no doubt that with the example of Egypt before us and your goodwill to help us, we can deal with this problem with success.

In effect, the problem has been accentuated by the efforts of British imperialism to create divisions. Of course, it is up to us to solve it by our own efforts and it would be improper for you or your party to associate yourselves with any particular group in this matter. You must necessarily be above such domestic matters. Nevertheless your influence in favour of unity will be helpful.

8. Apart from our official contacts, I would greatly welcome personal contacts by correspondence between you and me.

Weekly news-letters and publications should be sent to the above address and marked 'Foreign Department'. These news-letters can be either in English or French. Any special publications in Arabic might also be sent.

I have learnt since my return here that an Arab congress is being organised in Cairo by certain anti-Wafdist and pro-fascist elements, who

are known as the 'green shirts', that it will take place on November 7th in Cairo. You did not tell me anything about it when we met. I wonder if this congress has been organised just as a counter-blast to yours. I presume it will be supported by the palace party and will consider the Palestine problems. I shall be grateful if you will let me know more about it and suggest to us what our attitude should be in regard to it.

I understand that it will be a purely Muslim congress with a pan-Islamic bent. As such a national organisation like ours will not have contacts with it. I am told, however, that invitations have been issued to certain Muslim organisations in India and that some Indian Muslims have accepted them, among them being Sir Mohamad Yakub, Mr. M.A. Jinnah, Mr. Abdul Rahman Siddiqui<sup>3</sup> and Moulvi Madhar el Din.<sup>4</sup> Of these, Sir Mohamad Yakub, I regret to say, is very reactionary in politics and pro-British imperialism. The others are leading members of the Muslim League, which is a communal organisation. I am told also that two other representatives might be coming from India, namely Mufti Kifayatullah and Moulvi Abdul Halim Siddiqui.<sup>5</sup> These two might represent the Jamiat-ul-Ulema. This organisation is a semi-political and semi-religious one, which has often been associated with the National Congress in our struggle. Mufti Kifayatullah is a very fine man, but he is not very political.

These people no doubt are very much agitated about the Palestine situation and hence their desire to take part in the congress.

I find that the Palestine Arab Centre here in London knows about this proposed congress of November 7th but that it does not know anything about the Wafdist congress to be held on November 23rd.

I intend returning to India in the last week of October. I shall try to break journey in Egypt so that I may have another chance of meeting you and your colleagues.

You must have followed closely the developments in the international situation. It is remarkable how England and France have deserted Czechoslovakia. For the moment the outlook is depressing and all

3. A prominent Khilafatist and Muslim League leader of Bengal.

4. A Khilafat leader and prominent member of the Muslim League in Delhi; was murdered in 1939.

5. (1889-1969); leader of the Jamiat-ul-Ulema-i-Hind in U.P.



that we can say is that to rely on the friendship or protection of either of these countries is a dangerous thing.

With warm regards and good wishes,

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

## 72. Pacifism and Nonviolence<sup>1</sup>

In the course of the last few days, in Europe, we have seen the cult of the lathi being spread. Though Mahatma Gandhi has left the Congress, he is bigger than the Congress and is a great force. His fight for India's freedom is greater than that of any organisation, and he is still there to give his advice to us. Lately we have seen extraordinary triumphs being achieved by violence in Europe. The Mahatma has lived for the exact opposite. He stands for something entirely different. He has been called a non-resister, but he has not merely sat down and bowed his head to evil. Active resistance to evil has been his creed—if one liked it—peaceful and nonviolent resistance—but resistance nevertheless.

I cannot see Mahatma Gandhi submitting to what the great empires of Britain and France, with all their strength, have submitted to under threat of a powerful country. I cannot also see the Indian nationalist movement submitting to it either. His whole training has been such that one could not submit to anything degrading or bad.

I have been surprised by the attitude adopted by so many so-called pacifists. They have given their support to the most terrible things and they have subscribed to the standards which do not evoke respect. Gandhiji's is aggressive and fighting pacifism and his achievements in India have been outstanding.

I do not know how far Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy has reached the other countries but I believe that there is a growing realization that there should at least be some moral standards in the conduct of nations.

1. Speech at Indian students' hostel on the 69th birthday of Mahatma Gandhi, London, 2 October 1938. From *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 4 October 1938.

### 73. Peace and After<sup>1</sup>

The Prime Ministers who, after the Munich conference,<sup>2</sup> went to their homes were welcomed as the saviours of peace. Not a glance was given to the treaties or alliances and no recognition was afforded to the alliances of Czechoslovakia and all the obligations arising from her international contracts.

All that Prague and the Czechoslovak nation received was a crown of thorns. The life of the Czechoslovak Republic is not, however, closed by the Munich conference. This was the message broadcast from Prague yesterday through the wireless.

After these tense days of anxious suspense, of shame and humiliation, it is well that we should understand what has happened. It is evident that many people in India have failed to understand the course of events, and even the *National Herald* announced at one stage that Mr. Neville Chamberlain had called Hitler's bluff. *The Hindustan Times*, according to Reuter, has acclaimed the Munich conference as a magnificent stand on the part of Mr. Chamberlain, and hailed him in language of extravagant praise. What are we to make of all this sickening stuff? Is it mere ignorance on the part of those who conduct our newspapers? If so, it is inexcusable. Or is it a conscious lining up with fascism? The time is past when we could be vague about these matters. For the future good of India and the world, for our freedom and the freedom of others, we have to be clear where we stand.

The Congress has long been clear on this issue. We who have struggled for our freedom and attached the greatest importance to peace and high standards of public conduct, could only view with repugnance the emergence of fascism, based on human slavery and brutal violence and the destruction of all international codes of behaviour. Where would India be in a fascist world?

During the past four weeks we have been faced by a difficult problem. We stand for democracy and, as such, if there was a contest between

1. Signed article written at London, 2 October 1938. *National Herald*, 12 October 1938.
2. The Munich conference convened by Hitler on 29 September 1938 resulted in an agreement between Germany, Britain, France and Italy. It accepted German claims to Czechoslovak territory. A commission of four powers which was dominated by German and Italian representatives would settle any points in dispute.



democracy and fascism, inevitably our sympathies would go to the former and our resources should go to strengthen it. And yet, were we going to strengthen, at the same time, British imperialism and allow ourselves to be exploited by it? So put, the question was a difficult one to answer. But in reality the question did not arise.

Imperialist Britain was not going to support democracy, and, if by any chance it did so in reality, it would have to shed its imperialism. The British Government understood this well enough and threw all its weight on the side of fascism. It was not at Munich or Godesberg or Berchtesgaden that the decision was made, but months and years earlier. The world was to be made safe not for democracy but for fascism, and with this end in view the British National Government has functioned these many years. There were forces in England, even in the cabinet, which pulled it back. There was France trying, without avail, to check this movement. There was the mounting displeasure of the United States of America. But the clique that controlled the British Government deliberately and persistently pursued its policy of strengthening fascism in Europe.

Spain became a classic example of this policy and slowly it began to dawn on the British people where their government was leading them. Then came Austria, and Mr. Chamberlain by his public statements (no one knows how much further he went in his private assurances) invited Hitler to annex Austria. Even the British foreign office, following a traditional policy, viewed with dismay this drift to fascism and the attempt to make Germany the dominant power on the Continent.

Mr. Chamberlain did not allow this to come in the way of his pro-Nazi policy. The permanent head of the foreign office was removed from his key position.<sup>3</sup> Mr. Eden, the Foreign Secretary, also resigned. For a while, the National Government was shaken and it almost seemed that its days were numbered. But the Labour opposition was incredibly weak, undecided and afraid of assuming any responsibility. The moment passed.

Austria having been disposed of Czechoslovakia came on the scene. Hitler and the Nazi government gave all manner of assurances that they had no aggressive design on Czechoslovakia. But memories are short. Had not Hitler said exactly the same thing about Austria a month before its annexation? Earlier still, in 1935, he had stated with all solemnity in his Reichstag speech: "Germany will tread no other path than

3. Robert Gilbert Vansittart (1881-1957); permanent Under Secretary in the Foreign Office, 1930-38; was removed by Chamberlain and appointed chief diplomatic adviser.

that laid down by the peace treaties. We have no thought of invading any other country." Had he not given his approval to a treaty with Czechoslovakia itself, a treaty of arbitration of disputes?

Lord Halifax, as Foreign Secretary, referred to these assurances in Parliament on March 14, 1938. He said: "By these assurances, solemnly given and more than once repeated, we naturally expect the German Government to abide, and if indeed they desire to see European peace maintained, as I earnestly hope they do, there is no quarter in Europe in which it is more vital that undertakings should be scrupulously respected."

So speak statesmen from their places of authority, deluding a public which still attaches value to their words. Meanwhile they act differently. Goebbels<sup>4</sup> let us have a peep into the Nazi mind on April 7, 1938: "All this takes place step by step at a time when we run the least possible risk. The risks become smaller, the more powerful we become.... There was a time when the world spoke of the demands it would make on us. Today we speak only of the demands which we make on the world."

The British Government, if it sought peace and the defence of democracy, had a clear path—a path which led with certainty to both. This was a close association with France and Russia and Czechoslovakia on the firm plank of preventing aggression or the application of force to solve any problem. This was an overwhelming grouping with the backing of many of the smaller powers of Europe and the goodwill of the U.S.A. This would have been the basis of collective security. It is certain that peace would have been ensured and Nazi aggression checked.

But the British Government pursued an opposite policy and deliberately encouraged Nazi aggression by saying that they would not help Czechoslovakia. They sent Lord Runciman to Prague to threaten and coerce the Czech Government. They did not say a word when Germany mobilised on a vast scale. They did not venture to criticise the campaign of hate and lies which the propaganda machinery of the Nazis broadcast to the world. They did not remind Germany of her promises and assurances.

At one time it appeared that British public opinion might turn against them. Mr. Chamberlain then started his errands to Hitler and at the same time a desperate war scene was created in England. Mr. Chamberlain certainly deserves credit for the extraordinary cleverness with which he handled public opinion and, playing on the fear of war,

4. Joseph Goebbels (1897-1945); Nazi leader; incharge of party and government propaganda; committed suicide along with Hitler in the last days of the war.



brought about the very thing he had so long worked for—a complete triumph of Hitler at the expense of Czechoslovakia. He also laid the foundations of the four-power pact so that fascism and reaction may be consolidated and Russia might be isolated.

Mr. Chamberlain succeeded but he did so as an accomplice almost of Hitler's. The triumph is Hitler's. Mr. Garvin,<sup>5</sup> in today's *Observer*, sings this paean of praise: "At the head of 80,000,000 of reunited Germans and with an irresistible influence now over many more millions of other races on the further side of Europe, Herr Hitler stands forth as the mightiest sovereign and ruler since Napoleon and perhaps since Charlemagne."

*The Observer* represents that very clique which has had a dominating influence over Mr. Chamberlain and British foreign policy. At this moment of betrayal of democracy and the cutting up of the living body of Czechoslovakia, it can only think with joy of the triumph of Herr Hitler and Nazism. That is the achievement of Mr. Chamberlain, and, if praise is to be given for it, let us give it by all means.

We are suddenly launched into a new world of ultimatums, swift mobilisations, threats of overpowering forces, individual leaders hurriedly consulting together and deciding on surrender or war. The old methods of democracy fade away. France, immensely weaker now than ever before, will seek arrangements with Germany. A temporary arrangement may come, but France is too proud a country and too much attached to freedom to go down without a struggle. She had betrayed her ally, dishonoured herself and at the same time disabled herself. Who will support her in time of need? And yet we have to remember that Hitler has declared in his book that France has to be annihilated. War will always be in the air between Germany and France.

Russia, strong even by herself, will look eastwards more. Between her and the Western powers antagonism will grow. There will be no peace between her and triumphant fascism.

England is already in the German orbit. She has sacrificed others to placate the growing appetite of Germany. A day is soon coming when she will have to decide on conflict or sacrifices which concern her more intimately. She is not likely to give up what she has without struggle. So there is no peace in that prospect.

So in whichever direction we see there is no real peace but prospect of conflict or war. There will be more feverish preparation of war, and armaments will grow. Meanwhile England lines up with fascism and

5. James Louis Garvin (1868-1947); editor, *The Observer*, 1908-1942; supported policy of appeasement.

we await the result of this in Spain and elsewhere. But already there is a visible reaction and a revolt against the National Government. This will grow.

Much has happened which has distressed us exceedingly and our hearts go out to the people of Czechoslovakia, who have borne themselves throughout these terrible days with an amazing fortitude, dignity and disciplined courage. But we have learnt afresh some lessons that will help us to steer clear of the pitfalls that confront us. The British Government does not stand for democracy but for imperialism and fascism, which are the negation of democracy.

Already we see the methods of fascism being introduced in England. A mighty demonstration to condemn the government's policy was organised in the Albert Hall for September 30. But there was a ban on halls for this purpose and neither the Albert Hall nor any other was available. The press here is becoming almost as regimented as in Germany. England's word or her international undertakings have no value. Her friendship is dangerous for it is likely to be followed by betrayal.

There is a great deal of talk of self-determination. Well, we will have it in India and free our hundreds of millions from the grip of imperialism and fascism. We will be independent and cut ourselves away from the pro-fascist policy of Britain. Fascism may dominate in Europe but the world is not confined to Europe. There is America, there is Asia, there is the Soviet Union.

#### 74. The Problem of Palestine<sup>1</sup>

I am glad that Mr. Edward Thompson has written about Palestine in 'Notes on the Way'. I have watched with amazement the studied silence of the British press about conditions in Palestine. Occasionally a bomb outrage is referred to, or a murder, or the despatch of additional troops, but the horror that is continuously going on in that unfortunate Holy Land finds no mention. I have personal knowledge of how news has

1. London, 3 October 1938. Letter to the editor, *Time and Tide*, printed on 8 October 1938.



been sent to British newspapers and suppressed by them. Many reports have reached me of the frightfulness with which the Arab population is being treated, and a mere reading of them has shocked me beyond words. They may be exaggerated, but I have no doubt that there is a great deal of truth in them, and I can say with certainty that millions of people in Asia and Africa believe them and are infuriated by them. I know of their reactions in India and I have recently had occasion to discuss the Palestine situation with the leaders of the Egyptian national movement.

It is not a question of being pro-Jew or pro-Arab. I am pro-Jew in a sense because I think that the Jews have been shamefully treated in central Europe and I am full of sympathy for them and can appreciate their aspirations. But I am strongly pro-Arab also because I know that the Arabs are struggling for their freedom and are being crushed by British imperialism. I have met leaders of both Jews and Arabs and tried to understand their respective viewpoints.

The conflict is not essentially between the Arabs and the Jews. We must remember that the present problem of Palestine is of recent creation. It has come into existence since the Great War and the responsibility for it must rest with the British Government, which made lavish promises to both the Arabs and the Jews during the war and sought to exploit both to their own advantage. These promises were often mutually contradictory. Since the war it has not been love of the Jews that has moved the British Government but the desire to control an important route to India and the East. An independent Arab state might not be wholly amenable to control from Whitehall, and hence it was considered desirable to place the Jews in a key position. Situated as they were, the Jews had inevitably to rely on British protection and Palestine could thus indefinitely remain under British control. The Jews have fallen into this trap and their love of Palestine has been exploited for the purposes of British imperialism.

It is absolutely clear to me that Palestine is and must remain a fundamentally Arab country. I am convinced that no amount of terrorism or coercion will cow down the Arabs into submission. It is equally clear that the Jews are an essential and vital part of the country and should be given protection of their rights and a full opportunity to cooperate in building up Palestine. I think it is possible for both of these premises to be agreed to and a settlement arrived at on that basis, provided Arabs and Jews deal with each other directly and British imperialism does not exploit one against the other for protection of its own interests.

It must be realised that the present policy of the British Government is doomed to failure. The Arab national movement will never be crushed by bayonets and terrorism. Black and Tan methods did not succeed in Ireland, still less will they succeed in Palestine. Enforced partitions are equally doomed to failure. The British Government must also remember the terrible crop of bitterness and ill will that they are sowing, not only in the entire Muslim world but also in large parts of Asia and Africa.

To the Jews I would earnestly appeal to realise that their lining up with British imperialism and against a national movement will have disastrous results for their race. Their ability and resources are of infinite value to Palestine and nothing can stop them from having an honoured place in the country, provided they seek it in cooperation with the Arabs. They will never get it in opposition to the Arabs. Unhappily, there is a great deal of anti-Jewish sentiment in Europe today. There has never been any such feeling in Asia or Africa but, owing to the struggle in Palestine, this is growing and I am greatly distressed by it. It is time that the leaders of the Jews considered this problem dispassionately in its wider aspects.

#### 75. To A. C. N. Nambiar<sup>1</sup>

London  
October 3, 1938

My dear Nanu,

Thank you for your letter from Zurich. I am glad you are going back to Prague. As you can imagine we have all been terribly upset by recent developments. It is no use discussing them in a letter, but obviously things are not going to remain as they are. I hope you will continue full reports to the *Herald*.

I am still uncertain about my departure for India. Probably I shall go if I can get accommodation in about three weeks. Indu is much better. There is a possibility of her accompanying me to India. In any event she is supposed to take some rest for two or three months. She might as well do so in India and then come back and go to Oxford.

I still hope to see you before I return to India, but about this I shall write to you later when my programme is fixed up.

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.



When I was in Vienna I received a large number of applications from Jewish experts who wanted employment in India. It is just possible that a few of them may suit us. I am going through their papers. Obviously we cannot go ahead without personal interviews and finding out the exact terms. It may be necessary for you to see these people and report. That means either your going to Vienna or their coming to you. I do not know whether either of these courses is easily possible. However, I shall write more later.

Yours affectionately,  
Jawaharlal

## 76. The World Crisis<sup>1</sup>

I become angry when I review events of the past ten days, but anger does not help judgment. I did not expect Mr. Chamberlain and the British cabinet to act as the champions of democracy but I was surprised to see him act as the assassin of democracy. Another surprising thing was that many of the radical elements found themselves in a dilemma and were forced by those who upheld fascism and brutality to appear before the world as the advocates of war and the opponents of peace. That is how they would be represented in the next election while the fascists would appear as peacemakers. What is really shocking is that the passion for peace is exploited for something worse than war and that is treachery and betrayal. The real issues in the negotiations with Hitler are not peace and war but whether men like Mr. Chamberlain who are frightened of progress of Soviet Russia and possibly of communism should stand up to the fascist forces or line up with them.

If the Treaty of Versailles was bad the concord of Munich is a million times worse, and nothing but evil can come out of it. It is shameful that Czechoslovakia, a democratic country with a dignified government, should have been kept out of the consultations with a regime which had shown its utter vulgarity, and that only now could Mr. Chamberlain start the chorus of praise for a country that had sacrificed so much. What had been done at Munich would be remembered

1. Speech at Friends House, London, 4 October 1938. From *The Hindu*, 12 October 1938.

for all time all over the world. It would be remembered in India particularly, to the shame and dishonour of France and Britain.

We have had a long intercourse that has been an unfortunate one and we have long realised that we cannot rely on the word of any British Government. I do not like war but I would have a thousand wars before lowering my head to that evil thing called fascism. In India we are an unarmed people and our methods are peaceful but we have refused to submit to evil no matter how strong it may be. If in the future the alliance between fascism and imperialism shows itself up in India, I think I can say that you will find the Indian people refusing to submit or bow their heads to it. It is essential that India should be independent, and direct her own foreign policy completely free from that of Britain. Only in that way can she play her part in maintaining moral standards. That is what self-determination—a word prostituted in these last few days—really means for India.

## 77. The Hoax<sup>1</sup>

The tragic drama of Europe unfolds itself and each day brings further news of the dismemberment of the continent as we have known it. Czechoslovakia, from being a proud free nation, a citadel of democracy, is now a country sunken in sorrow and despair, with hungry wolves snarling and biting off bits of it, and its shrunken remains becoming almost a colony of Nazi Germany. South-east Europe trembles and falls into the Nazi orbit. There is trouble brewing in Danzig<sup>2</sup> and in Alsace-Lorraine.<sup>3</sup> Violence reigns supreme in Europe. No other way seems to be known here except aggressive violence or pitiful surrender.

The Great War cut up Europe anew; we have now a fresh refashioning of the Continent. And how far this will go on no one can tell. The two redeeming features are Spain and Russia. In spite of all the attempts of the British and French Governments to betray Spain, the

1. Signed article written at London, 15 October 1938. *National Herald*, 25 October 1938.
2. After Munich, Germany demanded that Poland should cede Danzig and grant Germany extra-territorial routes across the corridor.
3. After annexing the Sudetenland, Nazi Germany mounted its pressure on the Balkan states. Hitler also stepped up propaganda activities in Alsace-Lorraine.



Spanish people have refused to surrender to fascism and Nazism, and today, in spite of daily bombardments from the air, they hold aloft the torch of freedom and democracy. And Russia stands as a mighty bulwark against advancing Nazism.

While Europe shakes and trembles, the British Parliament is on holiday and the Prime Minister of Britain goes afishing. And *The Times*, that thunderer of old, has sunk to the level of Herr Hitler's own well-managed press and sings his praises from day to day. Even *Punch*, that very respectable organ of the British middle classes, has lost its temper with *The Times*, and in biting satire of a *Times* leader writes:

Justice alone was yielded  
And everyone was right:  
The sword that Hitler wielded  
Was not a sword of might.  
The French and we were tender  
And took the kindest course;  
The Czechs did not surrender  
To fear nor yet to force.  
Lord! I could write a column  
Of tripe to this intent,  
As smooth—as suave—as solemn—  
If England gave up Kent.

What has been at the back of British foreign policy during these past months? To imagine that Mr. Chamberlain was suddenly faced with the alternative of war and a humiliating peace is to delude oneself. Even to the last moment he held the important cards in his hands and could have imposed an honourable peace, or, at any rate, a much better agreement. No one can doubt that this was certain a few weeks earlier. But every such policy involved a measure of cooperation with Russia and a certain opposition to Hitler. Mr. Chamberlain's fundamental policy has been opposed to both these developments and he has consistently followed it ever since he came to power. That policy has been one of encouraging the growth of the Nazi power and of functioning almost as an ally of Hitler.

In order to follow this policy more effectively, he got rid of a popular Foreign Secretary, Mr. Eden. He even removed the permanent head of the foreign office, Sir Robert Vansittart, and took to Sir Horace Wilson<sup>4</sup> instead. In Spain, he tried his utmost to smother and kill the

4. (1882-1972); chief industrial adviser to Chamberlain's government; appointed adviser on foreign affairs, 1938; accompanied Chamberlain to Munich.

republic. In Czechoslovakia, he brought all the strength of his government to support the Nazi ultimatums and threatened the Czechs with all manner of penalties if they did not submit. It was not merely that he deserted the Czechs in their time of need. The reality was far worse. By sending Lord Runciman to Prague and his consistent pressure he acted throughout as the faithful friend and ally of Herr Hitler. Mr. Churchill has pointed out that, but for Britain's intervention, the Czechs could have got, at any time previously, much better terms.

At no time had Mr. Chamberlain thought in terms of a conflict with Germany. Hence the total unpreparedness of Britain when the question became a vital one. Even then the A.R.P. preparations were farcical and apparently meant to create panic. Mr. Chamberlain had decided to give a triumph to Herr Hitler and he succeeded in his endeavour, probably more than he intended.

The past is done with; it is the future that concerns us. But in understanding the future we must have a clear understanding of the motives of Mr. Chamberlain and the British Government. Munich has not changed them. These motives are to build up a fascist-imperialist alliance to resist democracy all over the world, and in particular to oppose the Soviet power. Ultimately to restrict democracy in England itself and to hold down the colonial countries with a firmer grip.

As events have turned out, such an alliance would be dominated by Nazi Germany with England as a junior partner. Mr. Chamberlain, no doubt, would have preferred to accept a subordinate position. The alternative of joining hands with Soviet Russia and the democratic forces is repugnant to him, for that would mean the end of Nazism and fascism and ultimately even imperialism.

A crisis is always a testing time for individuals and parties and their policies, and the recent crisis has at least done this much good that it has cleared the air and shown us where everyone stands. Mr. Chamberlain and his government are obvious partisans of fascism though the garb they would put round it would have a semi-democratic appearance. It is interesting to notice how the British Parliament is receding into the background. It does not meet when critical decisions have to be taken. It only gives its subsequent approval. The cabinet as such hardly counts or is even mentioned; it is the Prime Minister who counts. Mr. Chamberlain arrives at vital decisions without reference to his cabinet; he defends them in Parliament as his decisions, and not as the corporate decisions of the cabinet. Parliament gradually approximates to the Reichstag, and Mr. Chamberlain is beginning to fancy himself as a Fuehrer.

Attempts to suppress personal and civil liberty are becoming increasingly common in England, and the freedom of newspapers is interfered



with. It is well known that, in case war had begun, the government had decided to suppress all anti-government newspapers and criticism.

The Labour Party has not distinguished itself during the crisis. It played an utterly ineffective and insignificant role and did not seem to know its own mind when immediate and effective action was called for. One can expect little from it in the future, unless it changes greatly.

The pacifists behaved strangely. The more I see them here the more I realise the difference between them and the dynamic and effective pacifism of Gandhiji. Gandhiji has taught us not to submit to evil whatever the consequences, and he has shown us a way of combating evil. Pacifists in Europe seem to believe that the best way to avoid war is to submit to the threat of war. Thus, in effect, they become the supporters of those who threaten violence. Some pacifists here went to extraordinary lengths in their support of Herr Hitler in Czechoslovakia.

For me the greatest shock came from some of the leaders of the Independent Labour Party. They stood up in Parliament to praise Mr. Chamberlain as the man who brought peace. There was not a word of criticism of his policy. There was some vague talk of capitalism and socialism and of the evils of the present order. But in this grave crisis, their forces, such as they were, were lined with the serried ranks of the reactionaries. It was not surprising that they were cheered by the Conservatives.

I wondered at this strange exhibition of those who considered themselves revolutionaries and socialists. Words seem to have little meaning; it is after all action that counts, and it is by our actions that we shall be judged.

## 78. The New Europe<sup>1</sup>

A quick nemesis is overtaking those who played with war and peace during these fateful days and betrayed friends and allies. The assurance that war was not imminent, that this terrible danger was past for the time being at least, brought a tremendous feeling of relief to the millions. They rejoiced, as well they might, and Mr. Chamberlain basked in the sunshine of their joy. Was he not the peacemaker, who had

1. *National Herald*, 18 October 1938.

averted war single-handed? And yet in his heart he knew, and his well-drilled battalions knew, that peace was a far-off dream, and a war more terrible than ever, and far more dangerous for them, was lurking round the corner. The price they had paid in dishonour and faithlessness gave neither peace nor respite, and so they cry now: "to arms, to arms, let us work night and day for the war that is to come."

For a looker-on, these days of destiny have been full of meaning. Yet none of us can be a looker-on when the fate of the world hangs in the balance. Emotions crowd upon us; hope and fear and anger and disgust come in quick succession. Vast forces, opposing ideals were in conflict and for some days we stood on the edge of a razor, precariously balancing ourselves on the fleeting moment and peering into the dark and unknown future.

Strange that at this hour of destiny a Chamberlain and a Daladier should occupy the centre of the stage. We had long heard and we knew that Britain's government was the poorest that she had had since the days of Lord North.<sup>2</sup> And now these very men had to face destiny and the world witnessed their crumpling up and their utter poverty of thought or deed. Was it their fault, one wondered, or the fault of the people whom they represented and who cheered them after a deed of shame and sorrow? Or was it the death-gasp of democracy itself, as we had known it?

For years we had been watching the gradual betrayal of democracy and all the fine ideals that had gone to build up a League of Nations. We protested and condemned British policy in Manchuria, in Abyssinia, in Spain, in China again. We could hardly believe that it could go further, that Britain and France would themselves murder the democracy which had been their pride for so long. Yet Mr. Chamberlain and his colleagues gave that stab to the plaudits of the multitude.

On Tuesday, fascism trembled and Hitler, for all his brave words, thought of retreat. The people of Germany began to move and hold peace demonstrations. In Italy there was trouble.<sup>3</sup> Then at that critical moment Mr. Chamberlain came to the rescue. On Thursday, the Munich agreement was signed and fascism was triumphant.

2. Guilford Frederick North (1732-1793); British Prime Minister, 1770-82; responsible for the policy which led to the loss of the American colonies.
3. Germany was alarmed by the mobilisation of the British fleet which followed the British communique of 26 September 1938 that a German attack on Czechoslovakia would compel France, Britain and Russia to come to her assistance. Mussolini too cancelled orders of general mobilisation.



The old Europe was dead and a new continent was taking shape. Herr Hitler swept not only into Czechoslovakia with his legions but spread out his wings far and wide. Like a terrifying avalanche fascism spread and countries and governments bowed to its will. Poland, Lithuania, Hungary, the Balkans and Turkey, all looked to Berlin for orders. France became a second class power, England a junior partner in the fascist game. Hitler now dares to issue orders to England as to who should be her ministers and leaders, for no anti-fascists can be tolerated. England may not, except at the cost of provoking war with Germany, presume to have a Labour government.

And Czechoslovakia? "Farewell, France," she says, "Goodbye, England, you have crucified us to save yourselves. But do you imagine that even the price of dishonour and betrayal that you have paid will save you? Your time will come soon."

Most tragic and heart-rending of all is the fate of hundreds of thousands of German democrats handed over to Hitler.<sup>4</sup> Many have committed suicide, many have already been shot, and concentration camps grow up to swallow and engulf thousands.

France passes into the background, her noble history darkened by this last act of base betrayal. England is yet counted among the great powers, and she will not succumb totally without struggle. But her greatness has left her and under the Chamberlains and Halifaxes her decline is inevitable.

4. It was reported that Hitler had demanded the immediate surrender of all non-Nazi Sudetens including about ten thousand members of democratic organizations.

## 79. The Indian Princes<sup>1</sup>

It is a pleasant surprise to me that the problem of the Indian states does interest a British audience at a time of crisis like the present. We should not only express our disapproval of the states system in India but look at it in the context of the world situation. Those who think of Indian freedom cannot forget the states. We cannot have freedom for one part of India while the other part remains sunk in feudalism.

1. Speech in London, 21 October 1938. From *The Hindu*, 2 November 1938.

There can be no free India without the states. There cannot be a free federation with fascist cells dotted all over the country. It is geographically impossible. The states are an anachronism and fascist cells dotted all over the country within the household of a free India.

Similarly, when we think of world freedom, we cannot think of it unless the freedom of India and China is also considered. No one can be an effective anti-fascist unless he is an anti-imperialist also.

It would be easy to make a list of the enormities perpetrated by the princes, though one's senses are blunted now by what is happening in the fascist countries of Europe. The states are in fact totalitarian in a political if not in an economic sense. Till a few years ago no prince dared do anything that might displease the local British agent or the resident and it is really extraordinary that they should now talk of their independence and treaties. Why is this so? It is so because it is now in the interest of the British Government to encourage such talk. There is not the least doubt that if the British Government were to tell the Indian princes that they must accept federation, they would have no option but to accept. The talk about their rights and liberties is sheer nonsense, because it is now being raised at the instigation of the British Government so that a joint front against Indian nationalism be formed. As the Indian National Congress grows strong, Britain seeks to find other elements to fight it.

The whole Indian states system did not come down to us as a legacy of history, but was quite recently created by the British who had made treaties with odd persons who often did not belong to the states at all but were freebooters and adventurers. I do not think that in pure law they could be said to be independent. At the most, they were equivalent to the medieval barons of Europe. The treaties had been made a hundred and odd years ago. The world has changed greatly since then and so has India. But in the states we find that there is stagnation only.

It is not generally known that a large number of states are controlled by officers nominated by the British Government. It is these officers who actually rule and not the princes themselves. And yet these men came to the Round Table Conferences as representatives of the princes and spoke of the "sacredness of treaties". It is well known that any prince who is not fully pro-British gets into the bad books of the government and is removed.

During the last two years there has been a great awakening among the people of the states. In the more advanced states the leaders belong to the middle class with peasant backing. In backward states there is no middle class and the peasants themselves are leading the



struggle. In Travancore, there is a very high percentage of literacy, and the movement is of the middle class. Yet, there is terror in Travancore today, and the person responsible for it is the Prime Minister<sup>2</sup> who had recently praised Messrs. Hitler and Mussolini and expressed a desire for a similar regime in India. The mitigating feature of the old feudal system was that it was hopelessly inefficient. Taxes were heavy but rarely were they all collected. But the British administration now keeps an autocratic structure which is more efficient in collecting taxes. The situation is now, however, heading towards a crisis.

What have the people of Travancore done? Their only crime has been that they demanded responsible government. This is regarded as an exhibition of disloyalty towards the state. There is now semi-martial law and the military has been called out to aid the police. In Hyderabad, no public meeting can be held, not even a prayer meeting, unless special permission has been obtained and some money deposited as security.

Thus there prevails in the Indian states a complete totalitarian system. But this problem has to be faced in a world context as freedom like peace is indivisible.

2. C.P. Ramaswami Iyer.

## 80. Indian Freedom and World Politics<sup>1</sup>

The past weeks of crisis and disaster have shaken all of us up. War was happily avoided for the moment, but disaster came nevertheless, and the future is dark with possibilities of war and something that is worse even than war. When the time of trial came in Europe, it was obvious that the forces of real peace and progress were not strong enough or determined enough to face the issue. It was not the enemy abroad that mattered so much, but his reactionary allies at home, who stabbed democracy and freedom from behind, and thus ensured the triumph of brutal reaction and violence in Europe. Perhaps what moved these reactionary governments in so-called democratic countries was not fear of defeat but fear of victory, for that victory would have been a

1. London, 23 October 1938. *The Tribune* (London), 28 October 1938.

victory of real democracy and possibly an end of fascism in Europe. Fascism had to be kept going in Europe, whatever the cost. That cost has been a heavy one and the bills will continue to be presented and paid till disaster overwhelms the world.

The people of India have followed the course of events with pain and anguish. Wedded to peace and democratic freedom, they have watched the complete surrender of democracy with shock after shock of surprise. They have one consolation. They were no parties to this betrayal and dishonour.

Today the prestige of England and France has vanished utterly from all over the East. Unfortunately even the progressive forces in these countries have suffered because of this and little reliance is placed on them. When crisis came they failed to make any impression or even to pull together, and even now the lesson has not been sufficiently learnt. India feels more than ever that the only way to gain her objective of independence is by her own organised strength and will to freedom and through such sacrifices as may be demanded of her. She is not weak today; she is self-reliant and is conscious of her growing strength, and she has learnt not to surrender to evil or to superior physical might, whatever the consequences.

Inevitably we shall rely on ourselves but it is foolish to think on narrow national lines in this world today, especially after Munich and the triumphant domination of fascism over Europe. If the progressive forces all over the world cannot even now pull together they are doomed to annihilation and they will deserve that doom. Therefore India must necessarily pursue this policy of cooperation with those who stand for freedom. What will others do?

Recent events have demonstrated with startling clarity that freedom is indivisible. We cannot have a static world in which freedom and democracy exist in some parts and a total denial of freedom in other parts. There will be conflict between the two, for the very presence of democratic freedom is an offence in the eyes of fascism and ultimately undermines it. Therefore there is a continuous attempt by fascism to put an end to free conditions in other countries. This can either be met by a policy of surrender and a progressive suppression of liberties or by facing aggression and refusing to submit to it. The policy of the British Government is apparently the former one, or perhaps this is not surrender for them as they themselves approve of fascism. This simply cannot be the policy of those who care for freedom and democracy. What are these to do?

"To resist is to conquer" is the slogan of the Spanish Republic and they have lived up magnificently to that slogan. Alone in Europe, they



have shown that democracy, if it so wills, can defend itself successfully even against overwhelming odds. Powerful states have collapsed and proud empires have been humbled by methods of gangsterism. But the people of Spain stand unconquered and unsubdued, and out of the very horror they have gone through, they have built up a new Spain which fills all friends of democracy with hope.

If we are to face fascism, it is in that spirit that we have to do it. To hold hard to our principles and to freedom and to refuse to surrender even unto death. But if we compromise with those principles, and carry on our own imperialism while we combat fascism, we lose both friends and supporters as well as all the strength and enthusiasm that come from fighting for a worthy cause. If England really fought for democracy, she would have the world's sympathy and support. But who would sympathise with an imperialist England fighting to keep her colonies?

The weakness of England and France during the recent crisis was their imperialism. Imperialism cannot champion democracy; it cannot fight fascism effectively as at heart it sympathises with it. The empire of England, as that of France, will fade away before long but if the present policy continues they will not only end but end in further dishonour and will give place to fascist empires.

Collective security was meant to check violent aggression on the part of nations. It has failed because it had an imperialist basis, and so long as that foundation endures, it will not function effectively. And yet collective security is essential if a national and peaceful world order is to be evolved.

A new Europe is rising up before our eyes, a new world, and we have to understand it and adjust ourselves accordingly. Events are marching ahead and changing the shape of things as we have known them. There seems to be too much of the frightened and helpless spectator about the champion of freedom and democracy in Europe today. He has lost all initiative and can only bemoan his lot. It is time that this defeatist attitude was ended and the issues faced squarely and action taken.

The spread of fascism must be countered both at home and abroad. It can only be checked by encouraging democracy everywhere and placing our reliance on it. As an Indian I desire passionately the freedom of India and I shall go on working for it. But I feel now more than ever that this is necessary from the wider international viewpoint, in order to combat fascism. Only a free and democratic India can help democracy elsewhere. A subject India dominated by imperialism will be a burden which ever grows heavier and thus weakens the democratic front. British imperialism is now facing a difficult problem of its own

creation in Palestine, and a sorry mess they have made of it. They will not solve it by methods of terrorism. They will not solve any of their imperialist problems by coercion. This policy will only lead to their own weakening and the strengthening of fascist elements in those countries, as we see in the Arab world today. And India is a much vaster undertaking than little Palestine.

The only possible policy, if Britain believes in democracy, is to shed imperialism utterly and rapidly and replace it by free democratic institutions in these countries, which, instead of weakening it, will then be powerful allies. An independent democratic India will be a tower of strength against fascism in Europe or Asia.

There is no other effective way of holding fascism or of building up collective security. The old method has collapsed and to cling on to it with all its inner contradictions is to invite repeated disaster. All the armaments that Britain can build up will not give her sufficient strength to face the perils that will come, if she has feet of clay and bases herself on a rebellious empire. That armament itself might well be used ultimately for the further crushing of democracy in Europe and even in England.

To ask India to accept present conditions and to cooperate with Britain in sustaining a vanishing democracy, is to refuse to understand the mind and temper of India or the march of events in Europe. We must look things straight and get out of the mental ruts which have brought so much evil in their train. India believes in freedom and democracy and wants to give her support to any system that ensures them. She holds out her hand of fellowship to all who believe in them in England or elsewhere. But only a free India can do so, and Indian freedom thus becomes a vital factor in world politics.

## 81. The Real India<sup>1</sup>

In proposing the toast to India, I must apologise for my inability to follow the conventional method of an after-dinner speaker. The thoughts which are uppermost in my mind are such that it is impossible for me to indulge in witticism. I admit that I look sad. The

1. Speech at dinner on Diwali day organised by the Indians in London, 29 October 1938. From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 10 November 1938.



course of events in the world keeps my mind constantly weighed down with the thought of the powerful forces which are working to retard human progress. So far as India is concerned I am full of hopes. India is on the threshold of her freedom and her *izzat* in the world stands high. Since India is coming so much to the fore in world affairs, actions of every Indian abroad tend to be watched more and more closely, and general inferences are drawn from those actions. India itself is judged by the conduct of these individual representatives in foreign countries, and it is very important that nothing should be said or done which would, in the least, reflect discredit on India or distort the character of the brave and noble struggle she is waging for her freedom.

I have seen a number of Ravi Varma's<sup>2</sup> pictures which depict *Bharat Mata* as an elegant and well-fed lady holding in her numerous arms the symbols of wealth, power, etc. I wonder whether it is this image of *Bharat Mata* that those who drank the toast to India had in their minds. For my part, India that I invariably visualise is a totally different *Bharat Mata*. It is not the aristocratic and opulent India of the wealthy classes, but the India of the village, the peasant and his struggling family. That is the real India, and it is mere romanticism to think of our country in any other terms. Some of you present may be rather uncomfortable at the general trend of my remarks. Certainly, the India that I see is very different from the India I am addressing—well-dressed and in many cases well-to-do business and professional men, dressed in the most correct western evening dresses. Although most Indians prefer to give these functions as much an air of informality as possible, there are some who have so completely adopted the routine dress and gestures of upper class European social functions that, I suppose, they find it difficult even for one evening to discard their trappings, and recreate, in so far as conditions permit, the feeling and atmosphere of an Indian social gathering.

2. (1848-1906); well-known painter from Travancore of portraits and scenes from the Indian epics.

**82. Cable to India League<sup>1</sup>**

Convey my greetings to the Spain conference.<sup>2</sup> A complete alignment of the British Government with Nazi fascist forces has resulted in the betrayal of Czechoslovakia as seen in her dismemberment following the Munich agreement. The Anglo-Italian agreement has meant abandonment of all pretences to serve the cause of democracy and collective security. It has ensured world domination by fascism, with England serving submissively as a junior partner. However, all progressive forces must resist this and support the cause of democracy in Spain, China and elsewhere.

The Spanish Republic is carrying on a great struggle at present. The question of freedom in every country is vitally linked with the struggle that is now going on in Spain. Therefore all those who believe in democracy and freedom must support the Spanish Republic and oppose the British Government which symbolizes reaction today. The British Government is deluding people in the false name of peace to carry on its war policy which unless checked is inevitably going to result in disaster.

India stands for real peace based on freedom and policy of self-determination for subject peoples in the world. We are as much opposed to fascism as we are opposed to imperialism. The cause of democracy can be served better by extending its domain far and wide and by making colonial countries its bulwark and resisting all fascist encroachments. The only alternative to this is giving encouragement to gangsterism, the rule of violence in international affairs, and suppression of civil liberties and democratic procedure. There is no middle way between fascism and full democracy. Though the British Government has chosen the former way, I hope the British people will follow the path of democracy in Europe, China, India and other colonies.

Spain, in particular, calls for help in the name of all we hold dear and we must answer that call. The republican forces have triumphed in the

1. On board the ship *Strathnaver*, 10 November 1938. From *National Herald*, 16 November 1938.
2. Due to blockade of food shipments by the English and the French, the people of Spain were faced with hunger. The Indian students in London decided to help the Spanish people by giving up food for one day. Foodstuffs were also collected at major Indian ports for shipment to Spain.



field of battle in the face of overwhelming odds and despite deliberate obstructions put in their way by the British and French Governments. The people of Spain have shown what miracles can be performed by the people fighting for freedom.

The Spanish people are faced with starvation and millions of them are suffering from untold privations after having been rendered refugees from the areas which have passed under the control of the rebels. If we really care for the ideals of human freedom and courage and sacrifice for the great cause which we have so long cherished and also if we are moved by intelligent self-interest, we must help these gallant people with abundant supplies of food and necessities of life. We must ensure that freedom wins in Spain.

### 83. To V. K. Krishna Menon<sup>1</sup>

Bombay  
November 17, 1938

My dear Krishna,

We have just arrived here and I have received your letter of the 5th. I am sorry you are unwell.

I have taken the earliest opportunity to appeal for Spain. We are convening a meeting of all the principal associations connected with the export and sale of foodstuffs in Bombay to try to get something done. I shall write to you about it later but I want you to find out immediately from the Spanish ambassador what steps we should take to send the foodstuffs we collect. I suppose we should send it to some port in France. You will remember my saying that in case we are unable to arrange for the transport, we should like the Spanish Government to take charge of it from us here. Of course we will help as far as we can.

I shall be in Allahabad by the 25th stopping at Wardha on the way.

Yours affectionately,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

**84. Report on His Travels<sup>1</sup>**

My discussions with Lord Zetland, Lord Linlithgow, Lord Halifax and other authorities, during my stay in London, were of the nature of an exchange of views on the Indian political situation. There were no parleys of any kind, nor did I carry any terms from the British Government to Gandhiji.

I expressed my views quite frankly to the British authorities, explaining the Congress position. So far as they were concerned, being a government they could not talk as frankly as I did but they explained their views. I was trying to understand their views and they were trying to understand mine. I cannot say whether a common ground could or could not be found between these two sets of views. My interviews with Lord Zetland, Lord Linlithgow, Lord Lothian and Lord Halifax were nothing beyond friendly talks. Federation formed one of the subjects. So far as I was concerned, I expressed my views—the Congress position. So far as they were concerned, they could not be quite so frank as no government could talk in any language except in vague terms. My personal impression of this government is that it has succeeded quite remarkably in tying itself up into a knot, and in a mad frenzy it goes on tying itself into more and more knots. It is so obsessed with certain notions that its policy hinges on those notions. Thus, during the crisis, it would not approach Russia, simply because it is so antagonistic to that country.

Two things are obvious, viz., the realisation of the strength of the Indian people and the Indian national movement which has a sobering influence on reaction, and the ever-remaining possibility of a crisis of war and India's reaction to it. For the present, sub-consciously, a very great change is coming over the outlook of the British. Events have made them suddenly realise that they are fading out of the picture of imperialism. This is bringing about strange mental reactions but there is a feeling of submission to unalterable fate.

It is obvious that the present government in England does not enjoy the confidence of the British public. Still, it is tolerated as there is no alternative. The Labour Party is afraid of doing anything. However, there is a remarkable change in its outlook on the Indian problem.

1. Interview to the press, Bombay, 17 November 1938. From *The Hindu*, 18 November 1938.



Thanks to the recent events, Labour now admits that the only solution of the Indian problem is complete self-determination. So far as the Conservatives are concerned, we have disturbed their minds, but not their loyalty to the present Indian policy.

There is a rift in the Conservative Party, Mr. Churchill and Mr. Eden commanding more support in the country than in Parliament. Irrespective of his politics, Mr. Churchill is the ablest politician in England today. Still, the fact remains that England today has an unintelligent and reactionary government.

My absence from the country for five months has made it difficult for me to express any opinion on the situation here. Naturally, I have watched the developments in Europe which are bound to affect India along with the rest of the world. I have had occasions to observe these developments at close quarters in England and Czechoslovakia and at Geneva. I am astonished at the foreign policy of His Majesty's Government. Mr. Chamberlain's policy is so astounding that it has upset everyone and compelled revision of our previous notions. It is so deliberately in favour of the Nazi policy in Europe. Right now there could be no doubt that democracy in Europe is on its last legs unless something is done to save it. Public feeling in Europe is tremendously against the Nazi policy. Even the majority of people in Germany and Italy are against any war in Europe and are deeply opposed to the present policy of their governments.

Mr. Chamberlain has been given the credit for avoiding a war but this has in a sense obscured the real issue inasmuch as nobody wished to have a war and everybody wanted to avoid it. The British Government is more afraid of winning a war because that would mean the end of the present regimes in Germany and Italy and also mean British cooperation with Russia, which the present government wants to avoid at all costs. However, in Europe today there is great fear of war and preparations for war are going on. That is a sad commentary on the peace which Mr. Chamberlain brought from Munich. It is generally considered that France has become a second-class power. The whole of England is dissatisfied with the present policy pursued by Mr. Chamberlain and it is stated that even the British foreign office is opposed to it. But there is a general feeling that Mr. Chamberlain who is responsible for this state of affairs must bear the consequences. Events, however, march so rapidly that the consequences will be more disastrous and may come sooner than anticipated.

The British Government has given a free hand to the fascists. Indeed, so far as Mr. Chamberlain is concerned, he had deliberately encouraged Italy's action in Spain some months back. But his plans have

been upset by the resistance of the Spanish people. I must say that my visit to Spain produced a powerful influence on me. I cannot conceive of the Spanish people who are fighting for their republic being defeated. It is difficult to prophesy because Italy and Germany can pour troops, aeroplanes and war materials to help General Franco. But for this foreign aid, the insurgents would be swept off in a few weeks. The new army of the republic, built up in the last two years, is a magnificent army. It is curious and interesting to note that two of its greatest and ablest generals are commoners: one of them was a tailor and the other a mason two and a half years ago.<sup>2</sup>

In the military sense the republic is stronger than ever today but its most vital need is food. It has to shelter a vast number of refugees from the areas under General Franco. This food problem is very critical and therefore I appealed today at the reception at Ballard Pier for food for Spain.<sup>3</sup> I did so not merely due to humanitarian reasons, but for the more vital reason of self-interest, for the Spanish issue affects all of us who care greatly for democracy. I do not appeal for money but for foodgrains, flour and other materials. Jute and cotton are also welcome. I earnestly trust that the great mercantile associations in Bombay who deal in food products will give foodstuffs in abundance to be sent to Spain.

While in Spain, I was asked by the generals, officers and everyone to convey their greetings to the people of India. Those people had a strong sense of fighting not only for their national freedom but for democracy and freedom everywhere.

One fact that is worth noting is that India seems to have acquired a new status in international affairs. In international conferences and elsewhere, by which I do not mean the League of Nations, India functions practically on a level with the independent nations, and Indian nationalist opinion is valued greatly. There is a general feeling that India is on the threshold of independence and so the goodwill and friendship of India are considered worthwhile.

I may also explain what I had said about the Indian states in London. In my opinion the Indian states system is completely out of date and harmful. It prevents progress and therefore must go. How this is to be achieved is difficult for me to say. Obviously the people of the states should be brought on par with those in British India and

2. Modesto and Lister.

3. At the reception on his arrival in Bombay on 17 November 1938, Jawaharlal appealed to the merchants and other public associations of Bombay to send a ship laden with rice, wheat, sugar, oil and other foodstuffs to the people of Spain.



given all the rights and representation as envisaged under a democratic set-up. There are over a hundred small states which are not economically viable and therefore cannot continue as independent units. The major states may however continue to exist with all the democratic freedom for the people while the rulers remain as constitutional heads.

I have always been interested in the Indian states problem, but it would be incorrect to say that I would entirely devote myself to it to the exclusion of all other things.

The present policy of the Indian National Congress and the All India States People's Conference is directed towards the attainment of responsible government in the states. That is why I stressed the historical origin of these states in the meetings I addressed in London. There has been a great deal of misleading talk about the sovereignty and the so-called independence of the princes. The point to remember is that our objective has to be recognised by all, including the rulers of the states, because autocracy and feudal conditions can no longer be tolerated. The Congress has made it clear that in realising this objective, it wants to have the cooperation of the rulers as far as possible. Ultimately, there is no other way out except to introduce responsible government, and thus make the states as equal and free partners with the rest of India.

The whole conception of Indian states is so foreign to modern ideas that when people hear about the states they react against them. There is nothing like it anywhere else in the world. Of course, it applies to the system. There may be good rulers and there may be bad too. In modern political conditions one cannot have independent units unless they are economically viable. I can conceive of the rulers of such states being constitutional heads. These are my personal views. I am aware that the Indian National Congress makes no distinction between smaller and bigger states.

I regret that I was not able to go to Russia. My daughter's illness upset my European programme. I had already stayed abroad too long and did not wish to delay my departure to India. On leaving Europe I spent a few days in Egypt. Nahas Pasha, the Egyptian leader, received me, which was a recognition of the position of the Indian National Congress. One of the reasons for the failure of the Wafd Party in the last Egyptian elections was that the elections were not completely free. Before the elections took place, the party in power decided on the number of seats to be given to the Wafd Party. Further, there was no freedom of voting and the voters were called upon to say for whom they had voted. It was also alleged that there was no proper counting of votes and that the results were declared without any counting in

certain constituencies. The elections there were a manipulated affair. The conditions in Egypt, with all its so-called independence, resembled those prevailing in the Indian states. Egypt is more or less like a big Indian state. On one occasion the ex-Prime Minister, Nahas Pasha, had to face a severe lathi charge and had a narrow escape.

But the Wafd Party in Egypt is as popular as the Indian National Congress. All the same, it has not developed such a mass organisation as the Congress has done in this country. We in India have developed mass contacts. I do not think that under these circumstances it is possible to cook up elections in India as in Egypt. As in India, land is a major problem in Egypt. The government is now in the hands of the landowners, the ruler himself owning 10 per cent of the land in Egypt. Moreover, there is neither a peasant movement nor a workers' movement, and this is a major weakness of the nationalist movement in Egypt.



## THE WORLD CRISIS





## 1. Why India Supports China<sup>1</sup>

India's sympathy goes out for China for a variety of reasons. Like China, India is aspiring and fighting for national freedom. The forces of national freedom in both countries extend to each other the hand of sympathy and support. They must band themselves together against the urge of imperialism for exploitation and conquest. They must swear to prevent the use under imperialist control of their nationals and soldiers in each other's territory. They must mutually defend themselves by refusing economic relations with the imperialist invader. They must prepare themselves for the day when they can strike a simultaneous blow at all imperialism. They must send each other, in event of need, money, medical supplies and all manner of other possible help. India has a fourfold task to perform: (1) She must ceaselessly condemn the despatch of Indian troops to China and demand their withdrawal as also that of the Indian people attached to the British consulates in China; (2) she must organise an effective boycott of Japanese goods; (3) she must educate the people never to supply men and material to the British Empire in its wars; and (4) she must pay to China till it pinches. The ancient friendship of the two peoples of China and India must now be reinforced by the new *camaraderie* of the two freedom-loving nations.

While we condemn Japan and support China, we must not err in assessing the true role of Britain. A mighty propaganda machine has been set in motion and we must withstand it. The British commentators rejoice through our own talkies, radio and press at Britain's rearming to curb the "cynic's violation of right". The inference obviously is that Britain is a democracy, just and peaceful, and can be relied on to stand by humanity with her arms against brutality. The addresses of the United States President are also likely to cause confusion. In his insistence on the capacity of the democratic powers to protect the peace of the world, one might see in British armaments a factor of justice and peace.

One thing must be clear. There is, of course, the danger of war in the boast of the Italian spokesman who calculates the fascist bloc to contain 200 million men and to own 2 million tons of battleships. But we would be foolish if we pitted against these, the 3 million tons of the American

1. Printed in *Advance*, a newspaper of Calcutta, 21 August 1938.

and British navies. Britain is as much a part of the imperialist system as Japan or Italy and, far from ranging their armaments against each other, we must regard them as one solid bloc against progress and peace. Against the armaments of fascism, India can only pit the desire of her people for national freedom. She eagerly welcomes the cooperation of all democratic and socialist forces throughout the world but considers that the formal democracy of the British state is only a shabby smoke-screen and British armaments are surely no part of the world's democratic forces.

If Britain rearms, and until British monopoly capital is destroyed, she does so to secure her own interests. And her interests throughout the world are large. Even in the east, where Japan is hurling bombs over China, Britain is still the owner of the largest territories. In India, Australia, Malaya and other colonies, she owns over one-tenth of the world's territory and one-fifth of its population. Under Britain's protecting wings, Holland and France own between themselves another 2 per cent of the world's territory and 5 per cent of its population. On the basis of Asia and Australia alone, Britain is responsible for the daily humbling of nearly one-fourth of their surface and one-half of their population.

The enforced satiation of British imperialism and the fascist conquests of Japanese imperialism differ only in the extent of their unmasked brutality, but are alike in the damage they cause to human peace and progress.

One might also relevantly enquire if British arms have stood by peace and democracy during the eighteen months of the Spanish war and the six months of the fresh Japanese war on China. Day after day cities are being destroyed and human life killed. British monopoly capital is so tied up with Japanese monopoly capital that unless its own existence is imperilled, and a war is forced on it, it must just look on. The answer to the challenge of fascism to seize the whole world does not surely lie in British arms. Britain will not fight, and even if that were to happen, how does it fundamentally matter if the fascist brutality of Japanese imperialism were exchanged for the steady blood-sucking of British imperialism?

Who can fight the fascist menace of reaction and war? There are national freedom movements in India, China and other such countries. There is Soviet Russia which has definitely discarded imperialism as the basis of its state policy. There are democratic and socialist forces throughout the world such as the popular fronts and the world committees for peace and democracy. In the unity of these forces lies the answer to the fascist challenge.



2. To V. K. Krishna Menon<sup>1</sup>

Wardha  
November 21, 1938

My dear Krishna,

I wrote to you briefly from Bombay. I have taken full advantage of a certain enthusiasm created by my return to push the Spanish food question. It is difficult to say how far we will succeed in this matter, but on the whole the reception has been good and I expect that we shall certainly send something substantial. For the moment we concentrate on Bombay, as usual, in such matters. The bourgeoisie of Bombay helps us far more than the rest of the country put together. Unfortunately, the trade conditions are bad and therefore it is difficult to raise funds. Still I expect the equivalent of Rs. 50,000/- will be forthcoming from Bombay. I am fortunate enough, in spite of my leftist views and tendencies, to have a measure of popularity with the merchant class in Bombay. The committee we have formed consists entirely of merchants, stock-brokers and businessmen. The only two non-businessmen in it are the chairman, that is me, and one of the three secretaries, Hutheesing. The vice-presidents and two other secretaries and all the members are businessmen. I am enclosing a list of the organisations represented in this committee. You will see that it is a very impressive list and if they get going we shall meet with considerable success. I have cast the whole burden on them.

We shall of course try to do something in the rest of India also, especially in the ports — Karachi, Calcutta and Madras. But as time is an important element, Bombay will count for most.

At a committee meeting yesterday various questions were discussed. First of all it appears that some articles and foodstuffs are far cheaper in Europe than in India, even apart from the question of freight. Thus wheat and sugar will be cheaper there and it might be worthwhile for us to sell the wheat and sugar we get here and buy them in Europe. Of course, there is a certain sentimental value in sending goods direct from here and many things will be sent. Even in regard to purchases made there, we propose to ask the Bombay merchants to arrange through their agents in France to make the purchases. All this is rather vague and inquiries are being made. I hope to return to Bombay about the middle of December by which time much will have been done.

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

Among the articles that we might be able to collect are: wheat, rice, sugar, tea, coffee, soap, *bajra* and other foodgrains not known in Europe, cotton and jute. There are of course many other articles which might be obtained.

It is obviously undesirable for us to attempt to send things direct to Spain. I suppose it will be convenient to all parties concerned to hand over the articles in question to the Spanish authorities at some port in France, probably Marseilles. Would this be suitable? It may also be desirable to send the goods in separate batches rather than to wait for one big consignment.

I have asked Hutheesing to write to you but I think that he should get immediately into touch with the Spanish authorities so that there might be the least delay. I want you to find out and send us the address of the proper person for us to deal with in London or Paris or Barcelona or Marseilles. I am myself writing directly to Del Vayo<sup>2</sup> on the subject.

I have mentioned in the list above *bajra*. This and some other foodgrains are not known in Europe. They are very good and nourishing and they are cheaper than wheat. *Bajra* makes the most excellent porridge and bread.

There was some talk of sending a special steamer laden with foodstuffs for Spain, but it seems to me to be undesirable to organise this. Such a steamer would have to undergo considerable risks and we might have to wait a long time before we get enough material to fill it up. It is therefore much better to send the foodstuffs through the ordinary agencies as they are collected.

Yours affectionately,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

2. Foreign Minister in the Spanish Government.

### 3. To A. Del Vayo<sup>1</sup>

Wardha  
November 21, 1938

Dear Senor Del Vayo,

I reached India four days ago and I am glad to inform you that I have taken immediate steps to organise the sending of foodstuffs to Spain.

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L. Extracts.



A strong committee for the purpose called the Spanish Relief Committee has been formed in Bombay. This committee consists almost entirely of representatives of the principal merchants associations of Bombay, especially those associations which deal with the sale and export of food-stuffs. I am the president of this committee but in fact the merchants themselves have undertaken the burden to organise relief. I trust that speedy results will follow.

I shall be grateful to you if you will tell us with whom this committee should deal in regard to the export and delivery of foodstuffs and other articles. Many questions arise which require consultation by us with representatives of your government. The first question is as to the kind of foodstuffs and other articles that should be collected and sent. In regard to some foodgrains; it might be cheaper for us to buy them in Europe rather than to send them from here, as the European price is lower than the Indian price. There are some foodgrains which are peculiar to India and which are not known in Europe. They are very good and nourishing and we hope to send some of these to Spain. Among the articles that we hope to supply there will be wheat and other foodgrains, rice, sugar, tea, coffee, cotton, soap, some essential oils specially used for cooking food and other similar articles. We would be grateful if suggestions were sent to our committee as to other things required in Spain which we can easily obtain in India...

With greetings and all good wishes for success in your struggle,

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

#### 4. Appeal for Help to Spain<sup>1</sup>

Invitations to preside over various conferences or to visit various parts of India are pouring in upon me. I have already stated that it is quite impossible to accept such invitations. Much as I would like to visit various places and meet colleagues there, it is quite impossible for me to tour about or attend conferences and the like. I must devote myself

1. Statement to the press, Wardha, 22 November 1938. *National Herald*, 24 November 1938.

for some time to come to the heavy work that faces me. I trust therefore that my comrades and colleagues in various parts of India will appreciate my difficulty and not press me to visit any place or attend any conference.

Immediately on my arrival in Bombay, I ventured to draw the attention of the people to the plight of the people in Republican Spain and numerous refugees there and appeal for foodstuffs to be sent to them. My appeal has met with immediate heartening response, and a strong and representative committee of leading merchants and businessmen in Bombay has been formed.

Bombay, as so often in the past, has taken the lead in this matter and I am confident that her citizens will give generous support to this noble venture. But the call has not been made on Bombay alone, but on the whole of India and I earnestly trust that other provinces and cities will line up with Bombay and stretch out their helping hands to the sorely stricken people of Spain who, for two years and a half, have fought with astonishing courage and determination for democracy and freedom.

It has long been recognised that the struggle in Spain has a vital significance for all those who care for freedom. It is thus intimately related to our own struggle for freedom. By sending food to Spain, we help indirectly our own cause and enhance the prestige and position of India in the world. By the help we sent to China and Spain, we have compelled the attention of the world and made it clear that our sympathies and policy are not those of the British Government. We are thus building up an international position for our country, and our voice counts already in the councils of the world. Thus not only for humanitarian reason, but for considerations of self-interest and growing international status for India, we have to help the Spanish people with food.

It is our intention to send foodstuffs and some useful commodities. Money will not be sent but money contributions are welcome as they can be converted by us into food. I understand that many Indian students in England have decided to forego a meal once a week and to give the cost of it for Spanish relief. I commend this example to our young men and women. This relief is urgently needed during this winter.

Any kind of non-perishable foodstuffs will be welcomed, more especially wheat, rice, *bajra* and other foodgrains, sugar, tea, coffee and essential oils. Intimations of all such contributions as well as enquiries should be addressed to the secretaries, Spanish Relief Committee, Congress House, Bombay-4. Donations of money should be sent to the treasurer, Spanish Relief Committee.



## 5. Europe and India<sup>1</sup>

I toured Europe to study and to understand Western developments. We must use the knowledge thus gained in India's fight for freedom. Modern inventions have brought the countries of the world together, thereby enabling closer international contacts. We must take advantage of this to clear up the misunderstandings. While trying to solve the Indian problem, we should not ignore the world situation as it is bound to affect us. For instance, a merchant must watch the fluctuations of trade and must know the various rates, measures and weights and he must use them to his advantage. Similarly, we must study Western developments. We must express our sympathy for the oppressed and downtrodden and we must help them whenever we can.

It is necessary for us to observe closely the social, political, industrial and economic changes which are affecting the world. The governments of foreign countries have provided food and work for their unemployed. In England, for instance, about twenty lakhs of the unemployed are paid Rs. 50 each every month. Still they are dissatisfied. In India, however, the same amount is paid to babus and clerks. Yet these men do not concern themselves with India's problems, nor do they agitate for their solution. While millions of our countrymen are starving, the government makes no provision for them.

We have to tackle the problems of labour, agriculture and trade; and we must study the methods which the Western nations have used to deal with them. I visited Europe with the purpose of gaining first-hand knowledge which can be of help to us in solving the problems facing our country.

Italy's object in interfering in the affairs of Spain was to checkmate France and overawe England. The Spanish Republic is short of food. We should send as much of foodgrains as possible, and thus express our sympathy for the republican cause. The Spanish war cannot be described as a civil war; it is one between a republic and imperialist powers who aim at wiping out democracy. This war, therefore, will affect the whole world, including India. By giving help to China and Spain, we will be helping our cause and gaining an international understanding of our problems.

1. Speech at Wardha, 22 November 1938. From *The Hindu*, 23 November 1938.

England, France and Russia have scrapped a sacred agreement which bound them to help the Czechs when the latter's liberty was threatened. England, due to fear of Germany, has betrayed Czechoslovakia. A free India would have helped the Czechs, and would help all nations fighting for liberty.

The lesson we should draw from this struggle is to forget our differences and concentrate on our aim to achieve independence. We should fight shoulder to shoulder until our cherished goal is attained.

## 6. Spanish Relief<sup>1</sup>

I have ventured to appeal to the people of India for foodstuffs for the starving people of Republican Spain and a generous response is already being made to that appeal. But some people have doubts; some objections have been raised. Surely charity should begin at home, they say. Should we, with our hungry, poverty-stricken millions, think of the distress of others and forget the misery of our own people? There is logic and reason behind these objections, and it would indeed be absurd for us to pose as the helpers and saviours of the world when we cannot save ourselves.

But these objections proceed from a misunderstanding. Reasons based on humanity and charity are powerful enough to induce anyone to help Spain, but it is not for humanitarian reasons that we seek this help.

We seek it in order to throw our weight, such as it is, on the right side in a vital conflict which is of tremendous significance to us and the world. We seek it in order to dissociate ourselves publicly and through action from the policy of the British Government which has lined itself up with the fascist powers. We seek it in order to demonstrate to the world that we stand with the democratic and progressive forces of the world.

If India were an independent country directing her foreign policy and her international relations, she would undoubtedly have played an important part in world affairs and thrown her weight on the side of freedom. We cannot do so in the usual way as unhappily we are still a

1. Signed article printed in *National Herald*, 4 December 1938.



part of the British Empire and our foreign policy is determined at Whitehall and Downing Street. We can and we do sometimes disassociate ourselves from this policy by resolution and public utterance. But our voices do not go far and even if they reach people in other countries, they produce little effect unless some action accompanies them. What action is today open to us?

By our sending a medical mission to China, by our giving foodstuffs to the Spanish people, we compel the world's attention to our viewpoint. Thereby we begin to function on the international plane and the voice of India begins to be heard in the councils of the nations. This is our way of building up a foreign policy and of giving effect to it.

Thus our giving practical shape to our sympathies has a vital significance in giving India a position and a prestige which usually only free countries possess. India is supposed to be a member of the League of Nations and we pay a very large contribution to it every year. But everybody knows that our membership is a sham one and those who call themselves India's representatives there are nominated by and represent the British Government. India's prestige does not go up by their activities or by our association with the League. But the free aid that we give medically or otherwise to China and Spain stamps us as people who have a view and a will of their own, who refuse to bow down to British policy and who are determined to function as free people, whenever an opportunity offers itself.

Much has been said about foreign propaganda on behalf of India. Can anyone doubt that no amount of foreign touring and speeches, useful as they might be, can compare in effectiveness with the action that India takes in foreign countries? This action brings us into the centre of the world picture, and no amount of publicity and propaganda at vast expense would draw world attention to us to the same extent. We take our place then as of right in international conferences and speak as equals to equals, with authority and confidence.

The time has gone by when India went out into the outer world, repeating her long tale of sorrow and woe, a suppliant for favour, begging for sympathy and help. The sorrow and woe may be ours still and we naturally welcome all sympathy and comradeship. But the world is weary of tales of suffering and misery; it has had surfeit of them. It is interested in those who act. And so when India comes before the world with dignity and self-confidence and with some capacity for action and cooperation with others, respect and friendship greet her, and a thousand hands are eager and willing to shake her hand in fellowship.

An independent India would have her ambassadors, her ministers and her consuls in foreign countries and would spend a large sum of money

on them. We would spend that money even if the need at home were great, for our international position, our trade and commerce, our world contacts would depend on these representatives of ours. Today our ambassadors are our medical missions and our food missions to foreign countries, and the little that we spend on them comes back to us a thousandfold in gratitude and friendship and comradely ties between our people and theirs. The bonds that we are forging in mutual adversity will stand us in good stead in the years to come.

We send our little help to China and Spain, to gallant peoples writing in their own blood and agony the epic story of freedom's fight. But our help is not to China or Spain only, but rather it is consecrated to an ideal, to democracy, to freedom, for which we ourselves have suffered so much and will have to suffer still. And all those who care for freedom in this wide world of ours recognise us as their comrades and stand shoulder to shoulder with us. Is this a small gain to us for the paltry price that we pay?

India, let all remember, is no mean country today, submitting to subjection and superior might. She has grown in stature and has a role to play in the world. But with that growth have come responsibilities, and we, who are privileged to be her children, have to shoulder those responsibilities and develop vision and a world outlook. We have to accustom ourselves to functioning as a free people. Only thus shall we be worthy of our destiny.

## 7. Indian Labour in Malaya<sup>1</sup>

The memory of my visit<sup>2</sup> to the beautiful and pleasant land of Malaya is fresh in my mind, but, above all, I think of the lot of the thousands of the Indian workers there.

I have come to know of the heavy reductions which were made by planters in the wages of Indian labourers without any reference to India. I am glad that the Central Indian Association of Malaya resisted this and that the government in India banned all recruitment of south Indian labour to Malaya. Subsequently it appears that under cover of "voluntary emigration" labour recruitment continued in illicit form. But in

1. Message to a journal published by the Indians in Malaya. *National Herald*, 6 December 1938.

2. See *Selected Works*, Vol. 8, pp. 663-694.



September last the central assembly passed an amending bill regulating this form of labour emigration also.<sup>3</sup>

Efforts are now being made by vested interests in Malaya to open out a fresh source of cheap labour from India which they can exploit at their will. We have to be vigilant to prevent any such opportunity being given to them. India cannot and will not permit the exploitation of her children in this way and we must insist that no Indian worker is allowed to be lured away abroad unless decent wages and conditions of livelihood are assured for him. Therefore all emigration to Malaya must stop till such time as guarantees are forthcoming of proper treatment of our workers.

It is the business of all Indians in Malaya to support the cause of Indian labour there. The Congress has always been keenly interested in the status of Indians abroad and it will follow with every sympathy the struggle of the Indian workers in Malaya. In so far as it can, it will give every help to our fellow countrymen overseas.

India cannot tolerate the ill-treatment and exploitation of her children anywhere.

3. On 17 September 1938, the central assembly passed an amendment to the Indian Emigration Act of 1922 to regulate the emigration of unskilled labourers to other countries, particularly Malaya and Ceylon. The purpose of the amendment was not only to secure certain standards of wages and living for labourers who were assisted to migrate but also to ensure that these standards were not jeopardised by the emigration of people over whom the Government of India had no control.

## 8. The Tragedy of Palestine<sup>1</sup>

We have been told that a round table conference is going to be held in London to settle the question of Palestine.<sup>2</sup> We know something about

1. Signed article printed in *National Herald*, 18 December 1938.
2. The persecution of the Jews in Germany and other countries during the nineteen-thirties pushed up the Jewish immigration to Palestine to a large extent. The Arabs reacted violently to this influx. In 1937, a British commission recommended partition of Palestine into a Jewish and an Arab state. The partition commission found the task impossible as the two peoples were "inextricably tangled up". The British Government made another unsuccessful attempt to solve the problem by convening a round table conference in London.

round table conferences and how they are used to obscure issues and consolidate imperialistic control. Behind the thick veil of pious phrases and vague assurances in Parliament and conferences, sometimes we glimpse the terrible reality in Palestine. A strict censorship and conspiracy of silence of British newspapers prevents the truth reaching us, for however authenticated a statement of fact is, newspapers in England refuse to publish it, if it is in favour of the unhappy Arabs who are fighting and dying for freedom.

Unfortunately, the issue is made to appear as if it was a contest between the Arab and the Jew, and not a national struggle for freedom against imperialist domination. The terrible persecution of the Jews in Germany and elsewhere rightly draws the world's sympathy to them. It is a tragedy that two oppressed and suffering peoples, the Arabs and the Jews, should come into conflict with each other.

In this confusion of issues we must keep our minds clear, and not allow our sympathy for the Jews in their distress to work injustice for the Arabs, or our inevitable sympathy for the Arabs of Palestine translate itself into anti-Jew sentiment. To the Jews, as victims of fascist terror and brutality, we must extend all sympathy and help. But that does not and cannot mean that Arab interests in their country of Palestine can be ignored.

Palestine is an Arab country and Arab interests must prevail there. I have not a shadow of a doubt in my mind that justice demands this. I do not think there need be any conflict between Arab and Jew interests in Palestine and both can cooperate to their mutual advantage and for the advancement of Palestine. The real conflict is with British imperialism, and the struggle, whatever its varying phases, is a national struggle for freedom. It is the misfortune of the Jews that they have aligned themselves with British imperialism. In doing so they have not even shown practical wisdom, for British imperialism has had its day and fades away before our eyes.

For this vanishing support, they have risked the displeasure, not only of the entire Muslim world but of most Asiatic countries. That is a heavy price to pay in this world where already brutal persecution pursues them in many countries of Europe and elsewhere. Let the Arabs and Jews face each other in friendship and in a spirit of cooperation and their problems will find a solution. But that solution can and will only be on the basis of Arab freedom. Not all the king's horses nor all the king's men will be able to find any other solution.

Meanwhile, the king's horses and the king's men are functioning in Palestine and odd bits of information reach us of the terror that overshadows the country. Let us realise what this terror is. It is the old



martial law regime of the Punjab; it is a repetition of the methods of the Black and Tans in Ireland.

I have received some extracts from a letter from Palestine which tell us how the British army of occupation and invasion has functioned there. This letter was written by an English lawyer in Palestine, a man, I am definitely assured, of high character and ability and fully aware of what constitutes evidence. Another Englishman of character and position whose judgment I value tells me that this letter can be accepted as a fact.

The letter is not a new one; it was written in September last. But the argument holds and we must not delude ourselves into the belief that things are better in Palestine. The rulers of the British Empire humble themselves before Hitler and Mussolini, but they pride themselves that they are still strong enough to deal with Palestine.

The following are extracts from a letter dated September 16, 1938 received from an Englishman in Palestine, which is referred to in the above article:

The savagery of the authorities here, who have apparently embarked upon a policy of terrorism, is a matter upon which few of the British civilian population generally can trust themselves to speak or write.

After Moffat's assassination,<sup>3</sup> they "savaged" the little town of Jenin by blowing it (or a large portion of it) to smithereens. The official statement said, "150 houses had been demolished", an estimate not erring in exaggeration. Certain persons were shot down "while attempting to escape". Some of the means resorted to to obtain information from the population will not bear repetition.

After having blown up the houses and boasted, on the broadcast, of doing so, the authorities suddenly found that some of the property demolished belonged to Ruhi Bey Abdul Hadi, confidential adviser to His Excellency on Arab affairs! Much "back-patting" of Ruhi Bey, accompanied by "very sorry, old chap", and the production of a cheque book for compensation calmed him down. He, owing to his influence, of course will get prompt compensation, but the other wretched owners are equally as innocent as he.

It was done to strike terror into the people, not to punish the guilty. Not only were the houses demolished but, I am sorry to say, many of the population were robbed of money, jewellery, etc.,—including

3. Terrorist outbreaks increased in Palestine throughout August-September 1938. W.S. Moffat, the British assistant district commissioner, was assassinated at Jenin on 24 August 1938.

the safe and contents belonging to the Standard Oil Company of New York, concerning which the American consul has had something to say.

It is impossible to tell you everything that is going on here. I know of amazing cases: government employees (brave and loyal Arabs) engaged, for instance, on repairing the sabotage of telephone wires for which they may be shot at any moment by the rebels, have returned to their villages after a day's work to find their homes blown up by the British army, and their wives and children sitting homeless upon a heap of rubble. From such instances it is that the rebels are now gaining, not merely reinforcements, but, what is more serious, an ascendancy of morale.

On Saturday, here in Jaffa, the troops were merely shooting at sight anyone they had a mind to aim at. A government surveyor, English-speaking and educated, was returning home from his duties and was shot dead here in the street; also a little girl of seven on the same day.

This morning a cheerful little newspaper boy, who brings my morning paper, did not arrive. I enquired, and am told that he was shot.

I was talking to an English judge a few days ago, who expressed himself violently concerning the sights he had just seen in the Manshiye quarters. The doctor in Herbron could tell of cold-blooded murder and destruction perpetrated in that town by troops and police, apart from looting Arab cafes and shops.

This is the first time the Holy Land has been administered by a Christian government since the days of the crusaders! God forgive us.

"The healing hand of Christ", as understood and applied to the people of Palestine by the people of England, is a source of shame to us all.

The reaction of the Jews, who are also suffering from depredation and destruction, as well as murder and violence (on a very much less scale of course, to that of the Arabs) from the rebels is curious.

Best opinion among them holds that every Arab village destroyed, every herd of cattle and crop of foodstuffs carried off, every collective fine or punitive raid carried out by the government, only marks a step forward for the National Home, since the disarming of the Arab and the destruction of his villages and his resources increase the country's "absorptive capacity" for the Jews.



**9. To Charles Francois Baron<sup>1</sup>**

Allahabad  
December 23, 1938

Dear Monsieur Baron,

I am sorry for the delay in answering your letter of the 30th November. I have been travelling about a great deal.

I have discussed the matter with Mr. Subhas Bose and others. We feel that it would be desirable to have some centres in Paris which would help in bringing France and India nearer to each other. But such a centre cannot be officially run by the Congress. It has to be unofficial and the only support it can get is from newspapers in India. In France, I fear, it is not easy to get much help from the Indian newspapers at this stage. So, for the moment, I do not know what to suggest to you.

The critical state of European politics, especially in France, raises another difficulty. Such a centre cannot ignore the most vital questions of the day. If it deals with them, what attitude is it to take up when there are such great differences of opinion? Generally speaking, the attitude in India is completely opposed to the present policy of the British and French Governments. This is a difficulty, but, as I have stated above, the real difficulty is one of finances.

With all good wishes for the New Year,

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

**10. To Gertrud Baer<sup>1</sup>**

Allahabad  
December 24, 1938

Dear Friend,<sup>2</sup>

Thank you for your letter of December 12th.<sup>3</sup> I am afraid the situation in Europe, as in other parts of the world, is about as bad as it can be,

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. Joint chairman, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom.

3. She wrote that in Europe people were obsessed with the idea of war but they passionately wanted peace.



and both peace and freedom, for which we stand, get further and further away. There seems to be a paralysis of the mind. Yet, I suppose that all this is inevitable during this period of transition. Anyway, we have to continue working in our own respective spheres for the cause we cherish.

It was a pleasure to me to meet you and other friends at the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom headquarters. It is comforting to know, even in these days of confusion, that there are people everywhere who work for peace and freedom.

With all good wishes for the New Year,

Yours very sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

## 11. To Gerta Calmann<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
December 24, 1938

Dear Mrs. Calmann,<sup>2</sup>

I have your letter of the 17th November.<sup>3</sup> I remember well meeting you in Allahabad, and I have also pleasant memories of your husband and Mrs. Olden.<sup>4</sup>

I need hardly assure you that the sufferings of the Jews in Germany have greatly shocked all people here. I wish we could help these unfortunate sufferers. To some extent I have been trying to do so. I have received scores of applications and I have sent the information to various provincial governments and industrialists. I understand that a number of Jewish refugees have already come to India. But I fear that it will become more and more difficult for others to come, as the difficulties placed in their way by the British Government are very great.

It may however be possible for us to take some experts and specialists. But it is far more difficult for some thousands of men and women to be provided for in a separate colony or otherwise. This could only be done

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. A German Jew settled in London.

3. She requested Jawaharlal to find a suitable place for the Jews for building up "agricultural communities on the model of those in Palestine."

4. Ica Olden, a cousin of Hans, husband of Gerta Calmann.



by setting apart agricultural land for the purpose. India, as you know, is a heavily populated country with a tremendous land hunger among the people, chiefly because the country is mainly agricultural. There are millions of the unemployed on the land. It is one of our principal problems to find land for them or other occupation. It is difficult in the face of this unemployment and land hunger to set aside a large tract of territory for Jewish immigrants. But even apart from this, as I have said above, the governmental difficulties are almost insuperable.

I am terribly sorry that we cannot do more than we are actually doing for the Jews. We know something of being oppressed and persecuted and we are full of deep sympathy for the Jews in their distress. I am sure that in spite of everything the Jews will overcome the obstacles and the difficulties which encompass them today.

With my regards to you and Mrs. Olden,

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

## 12. Help to China and Spain<sup>1</sup>

There are people who seem to doubt the wisdom of despatch of food for the suffering people of Spain and the medical mission to China.<sup>2</sup> But I would like to emphasise that what the Congress has achieved by this step could not have accrued by spending even lakhs of rupees on foreign propaganda. I do not wish to minimise the importance and necessity of sending people abroad for propaganda work or for enlightening world public opinion on the aims and objects of the national movement in this country. The step which the Congress has taken also served another purpose. It has made manifest to the people of the world the attitude of the Congress towards the problems and issues involved in the fighting in Spain and China. It also showed to the world India's desire to extend cooperation and sympathy to the oppressed and afflicted sections of humanity.

1. Speech at Calcutta, 3 January 1939. From *The Hindu*, 4 January 1939.

2. An Indian medical mission to China sponsored by the Indian National Congress and led by Dr. Madan Atal left India on 1 September 1938.

British foreign policy that resulted in the Munich agreement stands condemned. The attitude that dictated British policy during the Czech crisis was not due to Britain's doubts about the ultimate outcome of any conflict with Germany and Italy. What the British Government seemed to be afraid of was that if they came out victorious in the fight with the help of Soviet Russia, that might enhance the prestige, power and position of the Soviets. I would also like to emphasise that the present foreign policy of Britain, which is directed towards placating the forces of Nazism and fascism, will ultimately prove ruinous to the cause of England.

Within the limitations of the 1935 Act, the Congress ministers are doing their humble bit in the way of constructive work for the benefit of the masses. The Congress ministers are not in office merely for the sake of remaining in office. They are there because the Congress had asked them to accept office. Nobody should therefore think that the Congress has ceased to be a fighting organisation.

### 13. Britain's Foreign Policy<sup>1</sup>

An acute and intense mental paralysis has overtaken the statesmen of France and England today and the world is in as much a topsy-turvy state as the Wonderland of Alice. Mr. Chamberlain's foreign policy represents an alliance of imperialism with fascism. But imperialism is definitely doomed to disintegrate.

The republicans of Spain are fighting against heavy odds, but their morale is still high and their organisation intact. It is a national fight to eliminate foreign elements from the country. India's heart goes out in an abundant measure to the republicans who have shown an astounding spirit which refuses to acknowledge defeat.

1. Speech at Allahabad University students' meeting, 7 January 1939. From *National Herald*, 10 January 1939.



Mr. Chamberlain has only snatched defeat out of the jaws of victory. The policy pursued by Chamberlain must inevitably reduce England's power unless some effective check is applied to the policy of appeasement. Although Mr. Chamberlain says that he has once more brought back peace with honour, his country continues its war-like preparations at a break-neck speed. No arms factories have stopped work. For the workers in these factories there are no Christmas or New Year Day holidays.

It may be said that the Munich agreement has brought about changes far greater than even those wrought by the First World War. And this transformation is going on at a tremendous pace. Thus a fair portion of the world is now engaged in active warfare.

The world is no doubt passing through a crisis of great magnitude and there has everywhere been a progressive slowing down of activity except in the armament factories. In this respect there is no essential difference between fascism and imperialism.

When the British criticise the Germans for their atrocities against the Jews, the Germans remind them of Britain's activities in Palestine. In fact, fascism in Europe is nothing but the application to home countries of the principles which imperialism has already tried in Asia. Yet the democratic tradition of the British people does place them in a slightly different position in regard to the home policy, which has nevertheless an imperialist background.

One striking fact today is that Mr. Chamberlain has most defiantly kicked out the traditional policy of the British foreign office. This is not a sudden move. It is mostly a pre-conceived plan. War could have been avoided by proceeding along the lines of the traditional British policy. If Britain had made it clear to Germany that in the event of violence being adopted, she would certainly resist it, Germany would have acted differently. It was within the British power to give this warning in the summer of 1938. Yet it was astounding to behold how deliberately the whole situation was planned out by Chamberlain's government. The Runciman mission and the repeated surrenders to Hitler's demands are not merely accidental. They are the results of a calculated policy of surrender to fascist aggression.

The fact is that England had to make a choice between Soviet Russia and Germany. If the British Government had genuinely desired an extension of democracy then Russia would not have appeared a greater danger than Germany. But the deliberate policy has been one of siding with fascism everywhere, either in Asia or in Europe. The struggle in Spain and England's part in it have shown this aspect of the British policy. The British Government has continuously been helping the

rebels. While the rebel aeroplanes bomb the British ships, Mr. Chamberlain comes out with apologies in Parliament.<sup>2</sup> It appears that he is prepared to swallow everything except the fall of the Nazi power, for that would lead to the establishment of an advanced socialistic government everywhere. In order to avoid this, Mr. Chamberlain is prepared even to sacrifice the interests of the British Empire.

Elimination of the British Empire is becoming a near possibility owing to the growing vulnerability of the seat of the empire in this age of aerial warfare. It is for this reason that the British people found themselves even in a greater peril, during the recent crisis, than the French. War seemed to be coming to the home of every citizen.

While I was in Spain, there used to be an average of two or three air raids every night. Despite this daily terror, the life of the ordinary citizen went on normally. Shops were open, traffic was busy, colleges and schools were functioning, while buildings crumbled under continuous bombardment. In spite of all this the republic has, during the last two years, opened 10,000 new schools. It has also built up a big and efficient army in this short duration.

The Spanish people have built up an efficient army, with able generals, without the much-needed experience of generations on which the British officials laid so much emphasis in India while arguing against the rapid Indianisation of the army. The Spanish civil war is only a prelude to a greater European war. The various European powers are experimenting their new instruments of warfare on a small scale in Spain.

Already, the rebels are receiving complete military aid and political advice from Germany, working under a kind of dual system. Hence for the republican government it was a national fight to keep out the foreign element from the country. They are fighting hard and it has disappointed those who expected them to give up the ghost in the very first instance. They have shown an astounding spirit which refuses to acknowledge defeat. Their chief difficulty is in regard to getting sufficient food-stuffs for which voluntary help is forthcoming from the sympathetic sections of people all over the world.

India has to play a great role in this topsy-turvy state of world politics. The disastrous foreign policy of the British Government must inevitably

2. For instance, speaking in the House of Commons on 14 June 1938, Chamberlain said that unless Britain was prepared to depart from the policy of non-intervention, effective protection could not be guaranteed to ships. He repeatedly stressed that effective protection against such air attacks on British ships in ports and within territorial waters could not be given without resort to retaliatory action.



strengthen our hands. But what is highly objectionable is the fact that we, as part of the British Empire, are supposed to be associated with this shameless policy. Ultimately, however, we have to frame our own foreign policy when our country becomes independent. But in the meanwhile, we should do something to dissociate ourselves from this policy. How are we to do this? Passing resolutions and expressing dissatisfaction are not enough. We should send regularly our missions to Palestine, China and other countries which are victims of British foreign policy. It may appear at first sight fantastic that India, which is a starving country, should send foodstuffs to Spain. But there is a better reason in that than appears on the surface. In order to develop international relations we have to bear some cost. We have to formulate our foreign policy from now on. A medical mission may not substantially help China but it will show to the world where our sympathies lay. It has already gained an enormous popularity for India in China.

Secondly, such missions are sure to give us a definite status in international conferences and deliberations. Thirdly, they are useful media for advertisement and propaganda—not of the vulgar type but of the right sort. These missions are therefore important not merely on humanitarian grounds but they also help us in formulating our foreign policy for free India.

I wish to warn the governments of the West that the old systems built on imperialism are today crumbling and that all efforts to keep them going will end in failure.

#### 14. Spain and Europe<sup>1</sup>

Historically speaking the British Empire has ceased to exist. British statesmen do no longer think in terms of dominating the world; but they just want security for themselves and they want to preserve their major imperialist interests like India. But once the decline has begun it cannot stop there. The British have built up their economy in such a

1. Speech at a meeting organised by the Indian Civil Liberties Union, Bombay, 10 January 1939. From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 11 January 1939.

fashion that it will not be possible for them to remain even a second-rate power; they will be reduced to the position of a fourth or fifth-rate power.

British foreign policy is a combination of intrigue, hypocrisy and falsehood. Mr. Chamberlain adopted a pro-Nazi-fascist policy because he thought he might have to liquidate his empire if he fought fascism.

I am amazed at the extraordinary sense of futility and utter helplessness which the people in Europe experienced in the face of the international situation. Mr. Winston Churchill stated that a thousand years later historians might be bewildered at the manner in which a victorious nation like Britain had surrendered to the threats of Italy and Germany. How was it that Britain and Germany were acting in a manner patently injurious to their own interests?

The key to understanding the maze of European politics during the last few years is British foreign policy. That policy has always followed a particular trend though not always deliberately. Occasionally, there appeared to be a conflict between Britain and Italy and between Britain and Germany. Britain has participated in the application of sanctions against Italy; she has supported Japan in the conflict between China and Japan; she has even spoken in tones of remonstrance to Germany. Nevertheless, she has consistently followed a policy of supporting the totalitarian countries.

After the Great War two new factors developed. One was the rise of Russia, and the other, the tremendous importance of the United States of America which, from being a debtor nation, has become overwhelmingly a creditor country. She has challenged the leadership of Britain in matters of finance.

But the more important factor has been the conflict between England and Russia. England's policy in the Far East had for a long time been one of support to Japan. Japan has grown under the shelter of British imperialism, and when Japan took Manchuria, Britain supported her because she wanted to utilise Japan against Soviet Russia.

This was the first challenge to the whole system of the League of Nations. Then other breaches of the covenant occurred in Abyssinia, China, Spain and central Europe. British foreign policy, while ostensibly supporting the League policy, played a prominent part in bringing about these breaches. Even when the Nazi regime came, it was Hitler's policy to get British support. He did get it, and Germany forged ahead under the sheltering care of British foreign policy. The Anglo-German Naval Treaty, contracted without informing the League or any other power, was in total contravention of the Versailles treaty. That was the beginning of the break-up of the Versailles system.



The price of the Anglo-German Naval Treaty was that France sought the support of Italy and brought about non-intervention in Abyssinia. Though some sanctions were invoked against Italy, other important sanctions were not at all used. In fact, the Anglo-Persian Oil Company worked day and night to help Mussolini right through. Indeed, British policy encouraged breaches of the League covenant.

Then came Spain. There was nothing more amazing than the policy of England and France with regard to Spain. The war in Spain was not a civil war but an invasion. England has done everything possible to help the rebels despite the fact that British ships were repeatedly sunk.

This policy was truly astonishing because it endangered the British Empire. If Spain was dominated by Italy, the Mediterranean would become a closed lake to Britain. Chamberlain was following a policy that was leading his country to disaster. But the policy pursued by Chamberlain was not so very different from that pursued by Baldwin though the latter might not have gone so far as Chamberlain did. British policy has always been definitely pro-fascist.

The reason for this is to be found in Britain's antagonism to Russia. She felt that if Germany collapsed, it would add to the strength of Russia. But it must be realised that the danger to the British Empire from Russia was only ideological and distant, because no country has so consistently followed a policy of peace as Russia. And yet England chose to support Germany as a counterblast to Russia.

On the other hand, France had developed a policy of friendship with Russia. The Russia-France-Czechoslovakia bloc was very powerful, and if Britain had supported that bloc, Germany and Italy would have been helpless. But Britain refused to support those powers.

Chamberlain's statement issued on the eve of the German occupation of Austria amounted to an invitation to Germany to take action against Austria.<sup>2</sup> The only reason for such a policy pursued by Britain was her opposition to Russia.

The Austrian occupation revealed the weakness of the German army. Military experts were surprised at the inefficiency of the German General Staff. On the other hand, the action of the Czech Government in

2. Chamberlain in his speech in the House of Commons on 23 February 1938 had confessed: "British foreign policy is founded on the principle that the system of collective security has ceased to exist and that smaller countries can rely no longer on the League of Nations or on international law to safeguard them from aggression."

mobilising a million men within the course of a few hours on May 21, 1938, showed the extraordinary efficiency of the Czech General Staff.

The Munich betrayal was the result of the Sudeten demand for autonomy, the fear caused by the Austrian occupation in the minds of the people who thought it safer to turn fascist, the Henleinist victory at the municipal elections, the threat of Nazi invasion, the Czech mobilisation, Chamberlain's intervention and the mission of the notoriously pro-Nazi Lord Runciman. Faced with the prospect of opposition from Britain and France, Czechoslovakia agreed to submit to the Runciman scheme. But on the very day that the scheme was handed over to the Henleinists the London *Times* came out with a leading article<sup>3</sup> suggesting the cession of territory, which was not one of the demands made even by the Henleinists. It has been denied that this article represented the views of the British foreign office, but it is a well-known fact that the article had been read and passed by some prominent members of the British cabinet before it was printed. It is also well known that Chamberlain, in one of his expansive moments, had suggested the cession of territory weeks before that time.

This network of intrigue, hypocrisy and falsehood resulted in Hitler obtaining more than he asked for at Berchtesgaden.<sup>4</sup> Since then Czechoslovakia has practically become a German colony. The Czechs are essentially a democratic and liberty-loving people, and they might rise again, but, at present, they are controlled by elements favourable to Germany.

I can testify from personal knowledge to the extraordinary sense of discipline of the Czech people. In the face of the terror of annihilation of their beautiful city, the citizens of Prague were not so panicky as those of London, the danger to which was more remote. But, unhappily, these people were totally betrayed by Chamberlain in pursuance of his policy of appeasement.

Chamberlain had brought from Munich a piece of paper signed by himself and Herr Hitler, and was triumphantly waving it, crying out that peace had come. But ever since Munich there has been greater talk of war and more feverish preparation for it than ever before.

3. On 7 September 1938, *The Times* suggested the cession of all the Sudeten German districts to Germany as the best solution of the problem.

4. In their talks at Berchtesgaden on 19 September 1938, Chamberlain conceded, in principle, Hitler's claim to bring back into the Reich the three million Sudeten Germans.



Munich has resulted in as big changes as had been brought about by the Great War. Without any war Britain and France have been pushed off the stage and are fast becoming second-rate powers, and still Chamberlain, like one bewitched, is pursuing his policy of appeasement which might ultimately cost him the British Empire.

There is a rough kind of justice in all this. Germany has effectively reminded Britain of its own record. Fascism is only employing in Europe the methods employed by imperialism in other continents. Fascism is a mirror to the past, and to a certain extent the present, of imperialism.

There are only two alternatives before the democratic governments, i.e., either they should become more democratic or less so. They have to grant further extension of democracy to the different parts of the empire or go fascist. The Spanish Government, which is being organised on a democratic basis while engaged in fighting for freedom, is a pointer to this. The same thing is happening in China. Ultimately, Mr. Chamberlain would have to liquidate the empire if he wants to fight fascism.

A French politician stated that India was a nuisance because England had to walk in fear of India and to that extent her foreign policy was hesitant.

I was astonished at the fact that rural Spain was being cultivated in the face of the devastation that was being wrought elsewhere. I was equally astonished at the manner in which life was being carried on in Barcelona. Barcelona looked a prosperous city with its trams running and with its kiosks and bookshops. But here and there were to be seen ruined buildings and gaping shell holes. I can never forget my experience of air raids and my visit to the front. I admire the manner in which the Spanish Government has created an army out of nothing and trained efficient officers. All the while amidst the horrors of war they were building schools and promoting literacy.

So vital a people cannot be easily crushed. It is possible that the republicans might continue to resist. But even if they are overwhelmed, the war in Spain would not end. The people of Spain are hostile to Franco, and as soon as the Italian army of occupation withdraws, the control would pass out of Franco's hands. The victory or defeat of the Spanish Republic is one of the greatest things that would count in the history of the world.

15. To R. Gowtum<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
January 22, 1939

My dear Gowtum,<sup>2</sup>

Your letter<sup>3</sup> of the 10th January addressed to Bardoli has just reached me. I do not know where you are now—in India or in Burma.

Certainly I shall go through any paper that you suggest, if my advice is needed. But the right persons for you to see are the Congress President and the General Secretary.

My own view is that the time has now come when Burma should go out of the Congress constitution. There is no point in keeping up appearances. Last year's riots have decided this matter for me.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. A.I.C.C. File No. P-8/1938-39, p. 195, N.M.M.L.
2. General secretary, Burma Congress Committee, 1929-37; member, A.I.C.C., for about six years; edited Anglo-Gujarati paper *Brahmadesh*.
3. He sought Jawaharlal's help in resolving the differences between the members of the Burma Congress Committee.

16. Homage to the Spanish Republic<sup>1</sup>

In this age when black reaction grips the world, and culture and civilisation decay, and violence seems to reign unchecked, the magnificent struggles of the Spanish and Chinese republics against overwhelming odds have lightened the darkness of many a wanderer through the pathless night. We sorrow for the incredible horrors that have taken place, but our hearts are full of pride and admiration for the human courage that has smiled through disaster and found greater strength in it, and for the invincible spirit of man that does not bend to insolent might, whatever the consequences. Anxiously we follow the fate of the people of Spain, and yet we know that they can never be crushed, for a cause

1. 24 January 1939. *China, Spain and the War*, (Allahabad, 1940), pp. 57-58.



that has this invincible courage and sacrifice behind it can never die. Madrid and Valencia and Barcelona will live for ever more, and out of their ashes the Spanish republicans will yet build up the free Spain of their desire.

We who struggle for our own freedom are deeply moved by this epic struggle of the Spanish Republic, for the freedom of the world is imperilled there. The frontiers of our struggle lie not only in our own country but in Spain and China also.

Meanwhile millions of refugees starve in republican Spain and women and children face not only the enemy bombs from the air but death through lack of food. India cannot remain indifferent to this terrible tragedy and we must make every effort to send them food and succour.

I congratulate those who have organised this performance and those who are taking part in it in order to aid the Spanish people in their dire distress. We can do little for these brave torch-bearers of freedom, but we can at least send them this tribute to their magnificent courage and to the cause to which they have offered their immeasurable sacrifice.

Homage to the Spanish Republic!

## 17. India Looks at the World<sup>1</sup>

Nationalism is in ill odour today in the West and has become the parent of aggressiveness, intolerance and brutal violence. All that is reactionary seeks shelter under that name—fascism, imperialism, race bigotry, and the crushing of that free spirit of inquiry which gave the semblance of greatness to Europe in the nineteenth century. Culture succumbs before its onslaught and civilisation decays. Democracy and freedom are its pet aversions, and in its name innocent men and women and children in Spain are bombed to death, and fierce race persecution takes place.

Yet it was nationalism that built up the nations of Europe a hundred years or more ago and provided the background for that civilisation whose end seems to be drawing near. And it is nationalism which is the driving force today in the countries of the East which suffer under foreign domination and seek freedom. To them it brings unity and

1. Almora, 25 January 1939. First printed in *Asia*, an American journal, and later reprinted in *The Unity of India*, (London, 1941), pp. 335-342.

vitality and a lifting of the burdens of the spirit which subjection entails. There is virtue in it up to a certain stage; till then it is a progressive force adding to human freedom. But even then it is a narrowing creed and a nation seeking freedom, like a person who is sick, can think of little besides its own struggle and its own misery.

India has been no exception to this rule, and often, in the intensity of the struggle, she has forgotten the world and thought only in terms of herself. But as strength came to her, and confidence born of success, she began to look beyond her frontiers. The increasing interest she has taken in the problems of the world is a measure of the growth of her nationalist movement. Perhaps nothing is so surprising in India today as this anxious interest in foreign affairs and the realisation that her own struggle for freedom is a part of the world struggle. And this interest is by no means confined to the intelligentsia but goes deep down to the worker, the petty shopkeeper and even, to a small extent, to the peasant. The invasion of Manchuria by Japan caused a wave of sympathy for China, and Japan which had so far been popular with Indians began to be disliked. The rape of Abyssinia by Italy was deeply felt and resented. The tragic events of central Europe produced a profound impression. But most of all India felt, almost as a personal sorrow, the revolt against the republic of Spain and the invasion of China, with all their attendant horrors. Thousands of demonstrations were held in favour of Spain and China, and out of our poverty we extended our helping hand to them in the shape of food and medical missions.

This reaction in India was not due primarily to humanitarian reasons, but to a growing realisation of the significance of the conflicts in the world and to an intelligent self-interest. We saw in fascism the mirror of the imperialism from which we had suffered, and in the growth of fascism we saw defeat for freedom and democracy for which we struggled. With our long experience of British imperialism, we distrusted the assurances, so often given, of British support of collective security and the League of Nations. Because of this we followed, perhaps with greater clarity than elsewhere, the development of British foreign policy towards cooperation with the fascist powers, and our opposition to British imperialism became a part of our opposition to all imperialism and fascism.

To this British foreign policy we were entirely opposed, and yet, as parts of the empire, we were bound by it. By resolution and public declaration we dissociated ourselves from it and endeavoured, in such ways as were open to us, to develop our own foreign policy. The medical mission that we sent to China or the foodstuffs that went from



India to Spain were our methods of asserting our foreign policy and dissociating ourselves from that of Britain. We laid down, further, our line of action in the event of world war breaking out. It was for the people of India to determine whether India would join a war or not, and any decision imposed upon us by Britain would be resisted. Nor were we prepared on any account to permit our resources to be exploited for an imperialist war.

The Indian nationalist movement has stood for many years for full independence and the severance of our ties with the British Empire. Recent events in Europe have made this an urgent necessity for us, for we cannot tolerate association with British foreign policy and the possibility of our resources being utilised for wrong ends. We must control our foreign policy, our finances and our defences, and have perfect freedom to develop our own contacts with other countries.

Foreign affairs are thus casting their long shadow over the Indian national struggle and the growing consciousness of this makes India look at the world with ever-increasing interest. She thinks of the day, which may not be long distant, when she will be a free country, and already she prepares mentally for that change. The British Empire is fading away before our eyes and everyone knows that it cannot hold India in subjection for long. Responsible statesmen in England no doubt realise this, and yet it is exceedingly difficult for them to give up the assumptions and mental atmosphere of a century and adapt themselves to what logic tells them is the inevitable end.

That is the dilemma of Britain today. There are only two courses open to her in regard to India. The natural and the logical course is to recognise what must be and adapt herself gracefully to it. This means the immediate recognition of India's right to self-determination on the basis of complete freedom and the drawing up of India's constitution by a constituent assembly consisting of her elected representatives. Such a decision, and immediate steps taken to implement it, would immediately bring about a psychological change and the old atmosphere of conflict and hostility would give place to a spirit of co-operation. India, achieving her independence in this way, would not look unfavourably to certain privileges in the matter of trade and commerce being granted to Britain. She might even accept certain financial burdens which in justice should not fall on her. We would be willing to pay this price for freedom with peace, for the cost of conflict will in any event be much greater. India would also be a friend and colleague in world affairs provided Britain stood for freedom and democracy.

The other course is to keep India in subjection and attempt to impose vital decisions on her. This would inevitably lead to a major conflict with Indian nationalism. It might delay Indian freedom for a while, but certainly it would not delay it for very long; and it is possible that the conflict itself might precipitate matters. It was no easy matter for the British Government to suppress the last civil disobedience movement. Today the Congress and the national movement are far stronger than they have ever been, and Britain, on the other hand, thanks to Chamberlain's policy, is dangerously near to impotence in foreign affairs. That does not mean that Britain cannot strike hard at India. She can certainly do so, but it will be a very difficult task to undertake, and if international crisis intervenes, as it well might, a perilous one. It is not surprising therefore that the British Government have no desire whatever to force a conflict in India. They would welcome a settlement with India, if this could be obtained without giving up their vital and vested interests. But any settlement means, in fact, a settlement with the National Congress. This, if it is genuinely attempted and is to be successful, means facing up to all the implications of the first of the two courses outlined above. British imperialism, by its very nature, is unable to do this. The British Government will therefore, at all costs, avoid the first course.

That is the dilemma, and there is no middle course except one of marking time. But time runs fast in this age of dictators, and events follow one another with a startling rapidity. At any moment, the edifice of 'appeasement', which Chamberlain has built up so laboriously even at the cost of what nations and individuals hold most dear, might collapse and bring catastrophe. What of India then? What will India do? That is the question that often worries British statesmen. For it will matter a great deal what India does. India will make a difference.

It is not as if India was waiting for a chance to profit by England's difficulty. Even during the Czechoslovakian crisis Mr. Gandhi made it clear that we do not blackmail or bargain.<sup>2</sup> But it is manifestly absurd to imagine that India would in any way help a government which was not only keeping her in subjection, but was also following a foreign policy which she detests and abhors. It is equally out of the question that we should forget our objective of independence and suspend our struggle simply because England was in difficulties. We shall pursue our path, and it seems inevitable that this will bring us into conflict with

2. In a press statement on 16 September 1938, Mahatma Gandhi said that "whatever support is to be given to the British should be given unconditionally."



the British Government, for we shall resist anything that is imposed upon us against our will.

Even apart from the European or Far Eastern situation, internal conditions in India will not permit of marking time for long. There is an apparent quiet on the surface, and in a great part of India Congress governments are functioning in the provinces, but there is an ominous rumbling, and signs are already visible pointing to an approaching crisis.

So the British Government cannot easily mark time for long. And yet they cannot make up their minds about India or any other problem and drift helplessly to disaster. They seem to have lost the capacity to think or act, and perhaps that is the surest sign of the decay of the British ruling classes, which have so long formed governments and controlled the empire. Their attitude to India cannot be considered by itself; it is part of their general world policy. A support of fascism in Europe does not fit in with the establishment of a free democratic state in India. If the latter was aimed at, it would mean the liquidation of British imperialism the world over, the strengthening of democracy in England, and an unrelenting opposition to fascism and all it stands for. It would mean the end of governments like the one under which England has the misfortune to suffer today.

It is clear, therefore, that under existing circumstances the British Government will not adopt the first course mentioned above. They will incline more towards the second course, and yet they will hesitate to adopt it and will try to find some middle way. That middle way is to aggravate some of our internal problems so that we may weaken and be in a mood to compromise with them. If this fails then, subject to the international situation and several other factors, they will adopt the method of repression. Even so, they will try to avoid a direct conflict, and will largely function through and behind various reactionary forces in India, notably the Indian princes and the communalists. We see the development of this line of action today.

The establishment of the Congress ministries in a large number of the provinces have brought new problems to the front. They have increased the Congress prestige and organisational power, and have enormously activated the masses, both peasants and workers. Some legislation has been passed in favour of the peasantry and the industrial workers and many of their burdens have been removed; but this has not always come up to their expectations. Vital economic problems press for solution, and they can only be tackled in a small and sometimes ineffective way, as the power to deal with them fundamentally is lacking under the present constitution with its numerous reservations and safeguards for existing vested interests. Thus social cleavages are appearing, and these have

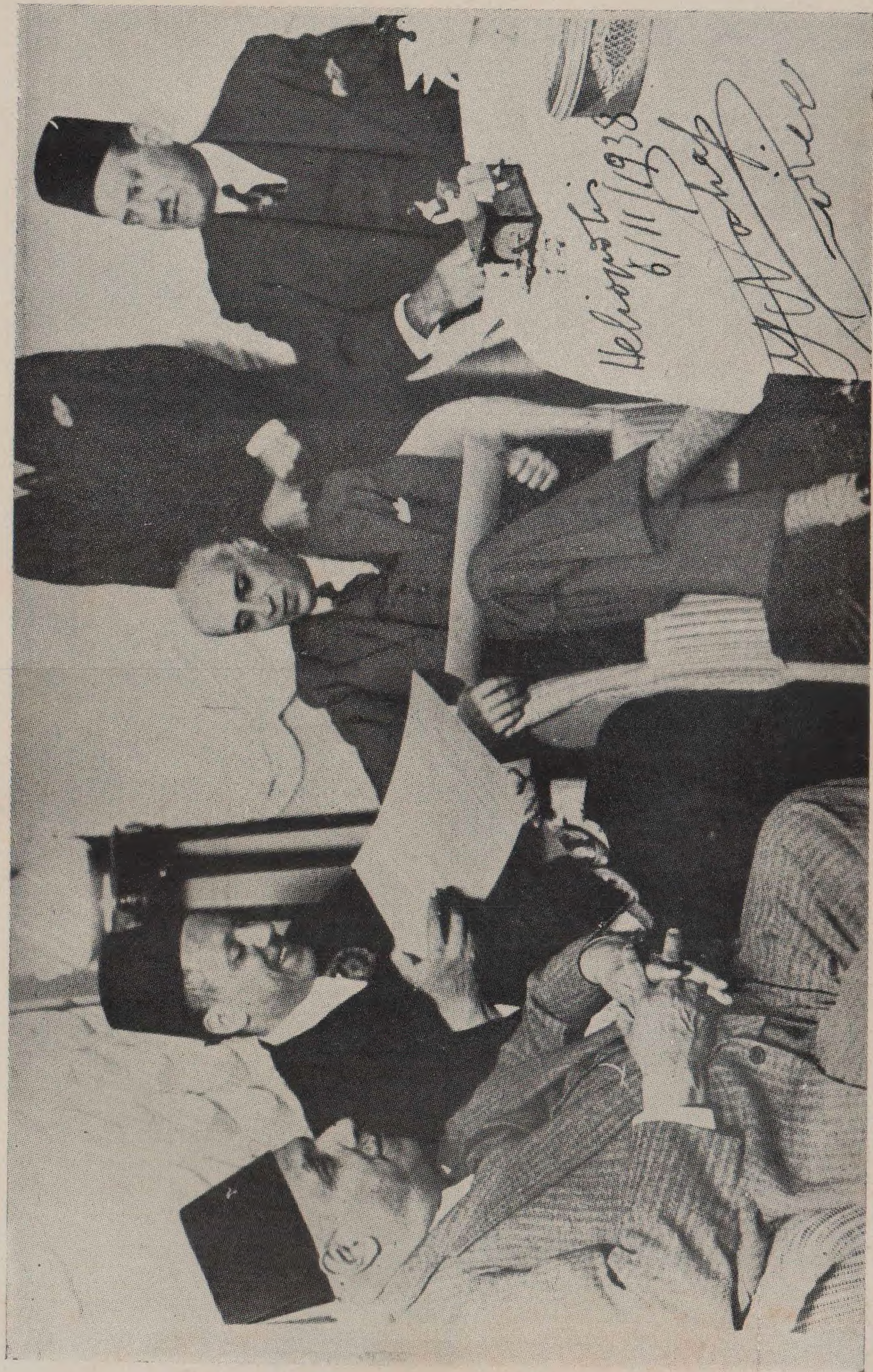
a tendency to disrupt the national movement. They will probably not result in any disruption, for the sense of unity for the political objective of independence is very great. Foreign observers, used to bitter class conflicts, are astonished at the way the Congress has held together, and effectively disciplined in a single movement various classes and groups whose interests conflict with one another.

The Hindu-Muslim problem has during the past year and a half assumed a new aspect, and is undoubtedly obstructing political progress. It is largely psychological, due to an apprehension in the minds of the Muslims that, under a democratic system, they might be ignored by a Hindu majority. The problem is a serious one and, because of its psychological basis, difficult to tackle. And yet it has no deep roots and it must not be confused with the conflicts of nationalities in Europe. For the vast majority of Muslims and Hindus are the same races, with much the same customs and language. The increasing importance of economic problems, which affect both alike, is the surest way of liquidating this problem. Meanwhile a tactful and generous approach will help in tinging it down.

The Indian states have rather suddenly come into the centre of the national political struggle, and their people are astir from Kashmir in the north to Hyderabad and Travancore in the south. In many states active struggles, involving civil disobedience, are proceeding. In some, popular victories have already been won. The most noticeable feature of these struggles is the part the British Government is playing in crushing the popular movement and bolstering up the feudal princes. Indeed, it has become obvious that the real resistance comes either from the British Government or British officers employed by the states. The princes count for little. The Congress had so far adopted a cautious policy in regard to the states but, with this new development, it is taking a more active part and, in particular, is opposing British interference and support of the old feudal order. It is quite possible that this conflict might spread from the states to the rest of India and become a major national conflict, involving even the Congress ministries in the provinces.

The provincial autonomy came nearly two years ago and already it seems to have largely exhausted its potentialities. Federation is yet far off although there is often talk of it. As proposed it is wholly rejected by the Congress and even by the principal Muslim organisation, and if it is sought to be imposed, it will certainly be resisted. The Viceroy and the British ministers say that it is coming, but they go on postponing it for fear of the conflict that seems inevitable. They still hope that some compromise might be arrived at, but there is likely to be none on the basis of this federation or anything like it. Recent developments in the





WITH NAHAS PASHA, 6 NOVEMBER 1938





INAUGURATING HINDI BHAWAN, SANTINIKETAN, 31 JANUARY 1939



states also make it exceedingly unlikely that this federation will ever function in India.

Thus India presents today a strange picture of the provinces under Congress governments cooperating in many matters with the British Government but with frequent friction between them, of a continuing background of hostility between the national movement and British imperialism, of major problems all heading for a crisis and a conflict. But the long shadow of Europe reaches us here and affects our movement as well as British policy towards us, and what happens in the world outside will greatly influence events in India. And so India looks at the world anxiously and with deepest interest and prepares for the day when she might have to make great decisions.

## 18. Our Path is Clear<sup>1</sup>

A year ago I stood in Bannu town on Independence Day surrounded by a host of Khudai Khidmatgars and other men of the frontier. We took the pledge together and, as was fitting, we took it in the Pushtu language. I had picked up a few words of this language during my frontier tour and I tried to repeat the pledge word by word, together with the assembled multitude. Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, that gaunt and well-loved figure of the north, was the leader of this solemn chorus, and above our heads floated proudly the national flag, emblem of that independence to which we pledged ourselves.

That day Khan Sahab took me to many other towns and villages and everywhere this solemn and significant ceremony was repeated and the pledge taken. The memory of that day clings to me and the earnest Pathan faces, taking that vow of freedom, form an unforgettable picture in my mind. To them it was no empty ritual, no ceremony without inner meaning, but a vital real thing symbolizing the long-suppressed desire of their hearts, which found some expression in words of promise and power. Thus we sealed our bond of brotherhood in the great cause of India's freedom.

1. Almora, 26 January 1939. *National Herald*, 26 January 1939. The text of this speech seems to have been sent to the *National Herald* in advance.



Today I take the pledge again in another frontier district of India; for Almora, though nearer to the heart of India, is yet one of the frontiers of this country, bordering on Tibet and Nepal. Another multitude gathers together from the distant valleys and the mountain tops, peasant folk from the borderland of Askote, a week's journey from here, and men and women from this ancient town of the Kumaun hills all assemble on this winter day in full view of the eternal snows, to take the pledge of independence.

Eight years have passed since we took this pledge for the first time, years heavy with sorrow for us and struggle, but also with a measure of triumph and achievement. But though success has come to us, we know its meagre worth, and the promised land has yet to be reached when the pledge of ours will redeem itself.

And the world? War rages in the Far East and in Spain to the accompaniment of incredible and inhuman atrocities, and the black night of reaction covers Europe. Multitudes, tortured beyond endurance, become refugees and wander from one country to another, seeking home and shelter, and finding none.

What then does our pledge mean to us today, what significance does it have? Has it grown stale and meaningless through too much repetition, or is it still the vital spark of old which fired us to action and brave endeavour? Have we grown tired and complacent, tied up with offices and the petty routine of administration, thinking in terms of compromise with the evil with which there can be no compromise? Have we forgotten that we still form part of a slave empire which exploits us and keeps us embedded in dire poverty, and which strangles freedom wherever in this world it fights for breath? Is it in this empire that we will find redemption of our pledge?

There are some among us, whose memory is of the shortest, who have already forgotten the pledge they took and the many brave resolutions that they made. But we do not forget, and we will not allow others to forget. We have pledged ourselves to win full independence, to put an end to imperialism in India and to sever our connection with the empire that encircles us. By that pledge we stand.

We stand by it even more than we did eight years ago for that empire has added to its sins by the butchery of democracy and freedom in central Europe and Spain, and the crushing of the Arab people in Palestine. We will not forget this, and, in war or peace, we shall fight this policy which hands over the world to fascism.

We stand by that pledge even more today because we have seen what petty change has come to us by provincial autonomy, and how imperialism still sits entrenched in the citadels. We see how India's will is



repeatedly ignored in the interests of British finance and industry. We see from day to day the employment of British power to crush the people of the states. Ranpur is a wilderness today,<sup>2</sup> and armed troops gather there from distant parts of India in order to terrorise the people of the Orissa states. In Jaipur, an English Prime Minister<sup>3</sup> dares to challenge not only the people of the state but the Congress organisation itself, a challenge that will be accepted. Everywhere it is becoming apparent that the struggle in the states is not with the helpless rulers but with the grim might of British imperialism.

Is this the way in which the British Government seeks the cooperation of the nationalist movement in provincial autonomy and endeavours to prepare the ground for federation? We have had enough of this foolery and the sooner it is ended the better.

The time has gone by for empty and misleading talk. We are up against the hard realities of the situation and the pledge we take today tells us what path we have to tread and what our inevitable goal is. There is going to be no federation in India of England's choosing. We will have no federation except a federation of a free India. To think or talk in other terms is to betray our pledge and to dishonour ourselves and our cause.

There will be no federation and the provincial autonomy of today must itself fade away and give place to an independent India, a bulwark of democracy and freedom, opposing fascism and imperialism alike. That is the meaning of the pledge.

And so we take the pledge realising its full significance and preparing ourselves for all that it involves. There is no peace or quiet for us or anyone else in the world today. We have to keep our knapsacks on our backs and be ready for the order to march. The people of Europe, in the vicious grip of fascism, and its allies, the governments of England and France, stumble helplessly and seek in vain a path through the darkness that envelops them. But our path is clear.

2. On 5 January 1939, two persons were killed in Ranpur, a small state in Orissa, in a firing ordered by the British political agent, Major Bazalgette. The enraged crowd retaliated by killing the agent.

3. Sir Beauchamp John served Jaipur state from January 1934 to April 1939.

## 19. On the International Situation<sup>1</sup>

Question: What would be the position in Europe if the main contestants were Britain and France on the one side and Germany and Italy on the other?

Jawaharlal Nehru : It appears that Russia would inevitably be drawn into such a war on the side of the so-called democracies. America would aid the democracies with arms and money if she did not actually declare war herself. Italy and Germany probably would be very soon embarrassed by internal disorders and in those circumstances could not possibly win.

Q: What would be India's attitude in case war breaks out?

JN: India's sympathies are very strongly anti-fascist and therefore she will inevitably wish for the defeat of fascism and the triumph of democracy. The policy which Mr. Chamberlain has pursued since the last crisis is highly repugnant to India, and she has dissociated herself from it in every way.

It must be emphasized that India will not submit to any form of exploitation to further Britain's war effort. But how can India fight for democracy if she herself does not have it?

India's participation in any war will have to be decided by herself.

Q: Do you think that Germany will attack Rumania?

JN: In the event of a conflict between Germany and Rumania, England and France cannot stand by and see Rumania being swallowed by Germany. Britain and France must not allow Germany to acquire the vital petroleum resources of Rumania. They were able, it is true, to watch Czechoslovakia being sacrificed to Germany, and still hoped for

1. Interview to the press, New Delhi, 21 March 1939. From *The Hindustan Times*, 22 March 1939.



peace, at least temporary peace. But Rumania, I believe, would be the last straw. Germany has already bitten off more than she can chew. I am absolutely certain that she cannot continue for long on the present lines. These fragments on her borders are quite indigestible and will form a constant menace to her safety.

Q: What have you to say of Italy's challenge to Britain in the Mediterranean?

JN: Italy's challenge to the ascendancy of Britain in the Mediterranean is of the greatest importance to India. The development of the air arm has put an end to sea power in the old sense, and the position in the Mediterranean has changed accordingly. It is not in India's interest that Italy should dominate this sea, but neither is it in our interest that British imperialism should remain dominant. Neither imperialism nor fascism is agreeable to us or offers any solution.

Q: Do you consider Britain and France as decadent races?

JN: I do not uphold the claims sometimes made in the totalitarian countries that Britain and France are decadent races. It is undeniable that the ruling classes of both the nations are somewhat played out and the present British Government is a perfect instance of this. This deterioration is due to the lack, in both England and France, of men capable of leadership. The great mass of British and French people however retain their vitality and strength. Other groups are now pushing up to replace the ruling classes, and these two nations will be the stronger for it. A certain swing to the right is now discernible in nearly all European countries. This is the result of the leanings of the middle classes who have been sitting on the fence between socialism and capitalism since the Great War, and lately, for fear of communism, are swinging over to the right. But in France, for instance, people will never adopt fascism unless it is forced down their throats, and even in Britain, where people are less fiercely individualistic, totalitarianism will not come to stay.

Q: Do you think India will go fascist at any time?

JN: A lot of foreign propaganda, particularly from Germany and Italy, pours into India to stir up trouble and create an atmosphere favourable to Germany and Italy. I am convinced that India would never go fascist though a section of Indians may become fascist-minded.

**Q:** What is your comment on the present Congress deadlock?

**JN:** Mr. Bose would shortly get into touch with Gandhiji and set up his Working Committee in accordance with the Congress resolution.<sup>2</sup> I do not believe in the rumours that Mr. Bose may disobey the Congress resolution in either letter or spirit. There is a growing desire for an early meeting of the A.I.C.C., particularly to discuss the international situation.

2. At the A.I.C.C. meeting at Tripuri, a resolution sponsored by Govind Ballabh Pant expressed confidence in the old Working Committee and strongly urged the President, Subhas Bose, "to nominate the Congress Working Committee in accordance with the wishes of Gandhiji". Bose replied that the resolution could not be discussed by the A.I.C.C. because neither the constitution nor past practice allowed him to place the resolution before the A.I.C.C.

## **20. India and Egypt<sup>1</sup>**

It has been a great privilege for us to welcome in India the distinguished members of the Wafd Party in Egypt, who have come here to represent their great national organisation as well as the Egyptian people. We welcomed them as our distinguished guests, but there was something more in our welcome, for they came to us as emblems of the spirit of nationalism and freedom from Egypt. We, in India, who have ourselves been imbued by this spirit and have built up a great organisation to embody that spirit and the struggle against a dominating imperialism for the freedom of our people, found ourselves completely in tune with a like sentiment in Egypt. Our peoples had much in common—close intercourse from the dawn of history, the exchange, even in remote ages past, of ideas and culture and merchandise, and then, in the modern period of history, a common struggle for freedom against a common imperialism. The bonds that linked us together in the past had weakened

1. Allahabad, 27 March 1939. J.N. Papers, N.M.M.L. This farewell message was sent to the Wafd Party delegation which had come to India under the leadership of Mahmood Bey to attend the fifty-second session of the Indian National Congress at Tripuri from 10 to 12 March 1939.



for long but this common interest and objective brought us together again and I earnestly hope that this visit will strengthen those bonds and make the link between the Egyptian and the Indian peoples an indissoluble one. In the world today freedom is being crushed, the lights go out in many places and darkness and reaction triumph. It is all the more necessary that those who adhere to the ideals of freedom and democracy should hold together and combat the common menace. Great and revolutionary changes are taking place all over the world and there can be no doubt that India will achieve independence and, by virtue of her great resources and manpower, play an important part in world affairs. While we believe in national independence we also believe in world cooperation between nations to ensure peace and freedom and world order.

India and Egypt have their own problems and, while we can learn from each other, we have to shoulder the burden of our problems separately. It is not for us to interfere in each other's internal affairs. But in the many larger tasks that are common to us we can cooperate to each other's advantage and to the advantage of the larger international good. The first step in this direction is to have full knowledge of each other and of our national movements. I hope that the visit of the Egyptian delegation will result in laying the foundations for this mutual knowledge and exchange of information.

The Egyptian delegation have had an exhausting time during their brief stay in India. India is a great country and they travelled vast distances, taking little rest. Even so, they saw only a small fraction of the country. I am sorry that they were unable to visit the universities of Aligarh, Allahabad and Banaras, and the great city of Calcutta as well as the whole of the south and east of India. Our countrymen were eager to welcome them in all these places and were disappointed that the shortness of time should have prevented them from having this pleasure. Brief as has been the tour of the Egyptian delegation in India, they will carry away with them, I hope, a picture, howsoever incomplete, of India of today, full of vitality and new urges, pushing her forward in all directions. They will have some idea of how our movement is based on the masses of our people and how, being a living movement, it reflects, as in a mirror, the ideological and other conflicts which stir the mind of India. After a long period of quiescent existence, the dynamics of history have beckoned to our people, and they march in step with it hoping to fulfil the role which history has assigned to them. That role is one of the closest cooperation with all freedom-loving people and more specially with the people of the Orient.

I trust that the delegates will carry back with them pleasant and lasting memories of their visit to India. They leave behind, wherever

they have been, lasting impressions of friendliness and comradeship between the peoples of the two countries and we shall long cherish these impressions. I hope that it will be possible for us to exchange visits frequently in order to keep our contacts ever fresh. I hope in particular that it may be possible for His Excellency Mustafa Nahas Pasha, the President of the Wafd, to visit us in the future. It is my earnest wish that the National Congress should send representatives to attend the Wafd congress which is to be held in April. If at all possible, this will be done. But it is difficult to be certain in view of the grave international and national problems that we have to face.

I would beg of the delegation to convey to His Excellency Mustafa Nahas Pasha, to the Wafd Party, and to the Egyptian people, the expression of our full faith in the comradeship and the solidarity of our two peoples in the realisation of the ideals we have set before us.

## 21. To Chen Ming Shu<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
April 6, 1939

Dear Mr. Chen Ming Shu,<sup>2</sup>

Thank you for your letter of February 17th, which I read with interest.<sup>3</sup> We in India have followed with the greatest sympathy and admiration the struggle of the Chinese people against Japanese aggression. We know that this struggle is a hard one but we are convinced that the people of China will triumph. We give full publicity to the cause of China in India.

As you perhaps know, our medical unit, sent by the Indian National Congress, is functioning in China. We hope to keep this there.

With all good wishes to the cause of Chinese freedom.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. President, Chinese People's Foreign Relations Association.

3. Chen Ming Shu denounced the inhuman conduct of the Japanese forces in China and voiced the determination of his country to resist "until collapse of her enemy and until winning of real peace." He wished Jawaharlal "to take concerted action against the aggressor" in the name of humanity.



22. To Kamil El Chadirchi<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
April 6, 1939

Dear Friend,<sup>2</sup>

I must apologise to you for the great delay in thanking you for the letter you sent me through Mr. Meherally.<sup>3</sup> It was a great pleasure to me to receive it. We have followed closely the developments in Iraq<sup>4</sup> and have sympathised with the struggle for freedom in the Arab world. We feel that there is much in common between the countries of the Orient and that we should develop contacts with each other. It was our great pleasure to welcome a delegation from the Wafd Party of Egypt to our National Congress last month. Unfortunately I have not been able to pay a visit to Iraq, although I have twice had glimpses of Baghdad in my journey by air. I hope that I shall have the opportunity to visit your country which has had such a magnificent past and which, I hope, has a bright future before it.

I entirely reciprocate your wish that India and Iraq should know each other better and should develop contacts.

With all good wishes to you and to your cause,

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. Secretary, People's Reform Party in Iraq.
3. In his letter of 13 December 1938, Kamil El Chadirchi wrote highly about India's civilisation, her leaders and the personality and intellectual strength of Jawaharlal. He desired closer relations between his country and India.
4. Though Iraq secured membership of the League of Nations through British initiative in 1932, Britain's control over the country's economic, political and strategic interests remained unchanged. The result was extreme nationalist discontent and disorder in the country.

### 23. Medical Mission to China<sup>1</sup>

The mission is likely to remain in China for at least another year and possibly for a longer period. One of the doctors with it, Dr. Cholkar,<sup>2</sup> will probably return to India in September next after completing a year. Another member, Dr. Kotnis,<sup>3</sup> may return early in 1940. The other members, Dr. Atal, Dr. Basu<sup>4</sup> and Dr. D. Mukherji,<sup>5</sup> intend staying on much longer. Indeed, Dr. Atal and Dr. Basu have expressed their readiness to remain in China for as long a period as desired by the Chinese. We feel that our mission should stay on there and that any premature withdrawal would be unfortunate and would create a bad impression. But for this purpose additional funds are needed. Donations should be sent to the secretary, Indian National Congress Medical Unit, Congress House, Bombay, or to the All India Congress Committee office, Swaraj Bhawan, Allahabad.

1. Appeal for funds for the Indian medical mission to China. *The Hindustan Times*, 8 April 1939.
2. M.R. Cholkar, a Congressman of Nagpur, went with the medical mission to China at the age of sixty, but returned in May 1939 because the climate did not suit him.
3. D.S. Kotnis (1910-1942); left for China on 1 September 1938 with other members of the medical mission; worked on the battle fronts in Chungking and Yenang; died while serving in the military hospital at Kokung.
4. Bijoy Basu (b. 1915); served in China with the Indian medical mission, 1938-43; revisited China in 1957, 1958 and 1973; is now a well-known acupuncture therapist.
5. Debesh Mukherji had to return to India in 1939 due to ill health; was imprisoned during the Quit India movement.



24. To Christine Shaddick<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
April 18, 1939

My dear Christine,<sup>2</sup>

I have just received your letter of the 10th April.<sup>3</sup> I am glad you wrote to me and told me something of what has been happening behind the scenes. This kind of thing is always happening here on a much bigger scale of course and I am not surprised that Krishna is being put out. But one need not attach too much importance to it. If one did, life would become too much of a burden.

It is difficult to write of all that is taking place. Spain has been a terrible blow and from day to day new things happen which hurt. It is not pleasant to read newspapers or to listen to the radio. But I suppose there is something which makes us carry on in spite of everything, and I cannot say that my outlook is completely pessimistic.

Indira has gone back to Europe in spite of the war scare, and she will be soon in London.

I enclose a cutting from a newspaper which might interest you.

I hope all is well with you and that you will not allow the troubles of the world to suppress your youthful spirits.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. Indira Gandhi Papers, N.M.M.L.

2. An active member of the India League in London.

3. She complained to Jawaharlal against communist efforts to weaken the India League and set up a rival organisation.

## 25. To William Rust<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
April 18, 1939

Dear Comrade Rust,<sup>2</sup>

Thank you for your letter of March 30th.<sup>3</sup> In spite of the heart-breaking things that have happened in Spain, I share your optimism and hope that Spain will rise again. Please give my regards to Aurora whom I remember very well.

We are having a difficult time here, but then no one is having an easy time anywhere.

With all good wishes,

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. (1903-1949); leading member of the British Communist Party; editor, *Young Worker*, 1924, and *Daily Worker* from 1930.
3. Rust regretted the fascist victory in Spain but hoped that "Spain will rise again and fascism will never gain a permanent grip there."

## 26. The Wooing of Russia<sup>1</sup>

Twenty years ago the young Soviet Republic was assailed on all sides by powerful nations — England, the United States, France, Japan. Within her own territories, counter-revolution, aided from abroad, raised its ugly head. Without an army, without money, without technical resources or industry, and faced by utter disorganisation following war and defeat and revolution, she hung on the brink of collapse and her enemies counted the hours when they would finally triumph over her. Even her friends

1. Signed article written at Allahabad, 30 May 1939. *National Herald*, 2 June 1939. Reprinted in *China, Spain and the War*, (Allahabad, 1940), pp. 129-133.



thought it an impossible venture, doomed to disappear. But the indomitable will and genius of a great man, embodying a new life and a new hope, triumphed over these amazing odds, and Soviet Russia lived.

Yet they looked upon her with contempt and disdain, an untouchable among nations, of the pariah breed that had dared to challenge her betters. They would not recognise her or deal with her, and insulted her and put every difficulty in her way. She still lived on, ignoring these gibes and intent on creating that new life which had inspired her to this great endeavour. Trial and misfortune came her way and often she erred and suffered for error. But still she went on with faith and energy building the world of her dreams.

Perhaps the dreams did not quite come true, the reality was somewhat different from the picture in the mind. Yet a new world did come into existence, a brave new world, with life and hope and security and opportunity for the millions that inhabited her broad territories. Industry spread with lightning speed, new cities sprang up, agriculture changed its aspect and collective farms replaced the outworn methods of yesterday, literacy became widespread, education and culture grew, the sciences were wooed and their planned methods applied to a nation's regeneration.

The world was interested. What was this strange phenomenon of rapid progress and lack of unemployment when the rest of the world was crushed and throttled by the great depression and unemployment grew everywhere? The statesmen and the chancellories did not approve of this abnormal behaviour. It was a bad example for their own people. They set about intriguing to get the Soviet into trouble; they irritated her by offensive behaviour; they tried to entangle her into wars. But she ignored these insults and refused to be drawn into war. Full of her gigantic programme of national reconstruction, she pursued the policy of peace in foreign affairs, deliberately and consistently.

Meanwhile she built her army and air force and as these grew, respect for her also grew, even among those who disliked her. But with respect there grew also fear, and so they still intrigued and tried to isolate her and to encourage the new fascist powers against her. The upholders of democracy in Europe made love to the Nazis and the fascists, put up with their aggressions, brutalities and vulgar insolence, betrayed those who had relied upon them, were treacherous to their friends and allies, all in the hope of crushing the Soviet and turning Nazi aggression against her. They ignored her at Munich although she was an ally<sup>2</sup> of France

2. Under the Franco-Soviet Pact of 2 May 1935, each country undertook to assist the other in case of unprovoked aggression by any European state.

as well as of the very country they had met to dismember. To the last the Soviet was faithful to her allies and commitments.

Eight months have passed since Munich and the policy of 'appeasement' has had full play. And now the gods laugh. There is no longer any ignoring of Soviet Russia. She has suitors galore, each one trying to win her favour. Even Hitler, the great enemy of communism, is respectful to her and seeks accommodation. France and England pursue her and in soft words try to hide their previous dislike of her.<sup>3</sup> Suddenly Soviet Russia has gained the whip hand in international affairs and it is her decision that will make a vital difference.

For Soviet Russia today is the most powerful country in the Eurasian continent. She is powerful not only because of a great army and vast air force but because of her enormous resources and the strength of the socialist structure she has built up. Hitler's Germany with all her armed might has feet of clay and no sustaining strength for war or peace. She is old already and requires frequent tonics to keep her going. The tonics have come to her through each fresh aggression and through the goodwill of England and France. Her resources are limited, her money power strained to the utmost. France, with her fine army, counts but she has already taken a back seat among the powers. England, with her great empire, where is she today? She has great resources but great weaknesses also; the days of her pride and domination are past.

Where would England be today, or France, or the other countries of western and northern and south-eastern Europe, were it not for Soviet Russia? It is a strange thought that the only effective bulwark against Nazi aggression in Europe is the Soviet. Without Soviet help most of the other countries might even collapse without a struggle. Without that help England's guarantee to Poland or Rumania means little.<sup>4</sup>

There are only two powers in the world today which count in the ultimate analysis—the United States of America and the Soviet Union. The United States are almost unapproachable and their resources are enormous. The Soviet Union is not so favourably situated geographically but is yet almost unbeatable. All other powers are of the second rank compared to these two and have to rely on alliances for their protection. And as time passes the disparity will increase.

3. On 6 May 1939, Chamberlain stated in the House of Commons that both France and Britain were examining certain Soviet proposals regarding Russia's entry into an anti-aggression front. But instead the Soviet Union concluded a non-aggression pact with Germany on 23 August 1939.

4. On 31 March 1939, the British Government assured Poland of full-fledged support in case of any threat to her independence. A similar pledge was given to Rumania on 13 April 1939.



And so Soviet Russia, with all her communism, is wooed by those who hated her, and the gods laugh.

## 27. England's Dilemma<sup>1</sup>

British foreign policy was traditionally based on the protection of the empire and empire routes, on the maintenance of the balance of power in Europe which gave England a dominating voice, and on the consolidation of British financial supremacy which had lasted for a hundred years prior to the Great War. England's industrial domination began to be challenged by the United States and Germany in the second half of the nineteenth century. Conflicts of imperialisms grew which led to the War of 1914. That war left England politically in a very advantageous position but her financial dominance was challenged by the United States. After a hard conflict with America, she managed to retain that financial position in the world, although she was a debtor nation and the United States were far richer and were the sole creditor nation among the great powers. But the price England paid for this seeming victory was a heavy one and unemployment grew and her industries languished. Then came the great slump.

It was curious that while England had been the leader in introducing political democracy, she was backward in the social sphere. Even today England is far more conservative in social matters than most countries in Europe. The strain of social conflict was avoided or lessened because of her prosperity and the wealth that poured in from the exploitation of her empire. To some small extent her working class became sharers in this new wealth and were imperialist in outlook. England's real proletariat was in India and in the British colonies.

The rise of Soviet Russia and the growth of communist and socialist ideas disturbed the ruling classes of Britain and they tried to put an end to the Soviet soon after the Great War. They failed in this but their attitude of hostility continued. Russia was looked upon as both a social and political danger and so the traditional policy of the foreign office

1. Signed article written at Allahabad, 31 May 1939. *National Herald*, 3, 4 and 6 June 1939. Reprinted in *China, Spain and the War*, (Allahabad, 1940), pp. 134-151.

fitted in with this opposition to her. Japanese aggression in Manchuria led inevitably, unless checked, to the undermining of the whole structure of the League of Nations.<sup>2</sup> And yet it was not only tolerated but encouraged by England. Sir John Simon,<sup>3</sup> who was Secretary for Foreign Affairs then, went out of his way to support Japan, and thus sabotage the League.<sup>4</sup> The whole basis of British policy was then and continued to be in opposition to the Soviet Union and the desire to weaken it both in Europe and the Far East. The foreign office or the British ruling classes were quite clear in their own minds and had no doubts. Some elements in the country might shout and protest but they did not influence policy; only occasionally they influenced the manner of enunciating that basic policy.

The coming of Hitler brought a confusing factor into the situation. The confusion arose in two ways; this threatened to upset the balance of power in Europe, and the British public generally was hostile to Hitler and his methods. But the foreign office continued to pursue its old policy. The threat from Hitler was a remote one while the social and political threat from the Soviet was deemed to be more immediate and dangerous. As for public opinion it was soothed by brave words occasionally while the old policy continued. This policy now aimed at utilising Hitler against the Soviet. And so Hitler was encouraged in every way and in fact Nazi Germany grew in power under the direct protection of the British Government. This encouragement went so far as to alienate and frighten France. The Anglo-German Naval Treaty, made in direct defiance of the treaty of Versailles and of the League, and without even the knowledge of the French Government, agitated France so much that she rushed into the arms of Mussolini and gave guarantees not to interfere if Abyssinia was invaded. Mussolini knew that if France did not interfere, neither would England. He had a free field now. Thus the Abyssinian invasion was the direct result of British policy.

It was not wholly liked by Britain for certain British imperial interests were involved—the upper waters of the Nile, the Suez Canal and the

2. See *Selected Works*, Vol. 7, p. 54.

3. (1873-1954); lawyer and politician; Liberal M.P., 1906; attorney general, 1915; Home Secretary, 1915-16; chairman, Indian Statutory Commission, 1927-30; Foreign Secretary, 1931-35; Chancellor of the Exchequer, 1937-40; Lord Chancellor in the war-time coalition government, 1940-45.

4. Defending the Japanese aggression in Manchuria, Simon stated in the House of Commons on 27 February 1933: "The action of the Japanese army does not in the least resemble the invasion by a foreign force on some other country, because Japan, in fact, has exceptional rights over strips of territory there."



Mediterranean. A conflict thus arose between these British imperial interests and the policy that the foreign office was pursuing. The latter prevailed as the British Government was totally averse to bringing about the downfall of the fascist regime in Italy. Their policy aimed at protecting fascism and Nazism and combating communism through them. The social danger was considered greater than the political. But British public opinion was strongly opposed to Mussolini's invasion of Abyssinia and something had to be done to soothe it. The League agreed to some relatively harmless sanctions and Sir Samuel Hoare, then Foreign Secretary, delivered a speech expounding the principles of the League and swearing by collective security—a speech that was duly applauded.<sup>5</sup> England felt very virtuous and pleased with herself, as she always does when her imperial interests are made to fit in with high morality. That same Sir Samuel very soon after entirely forgot his Geneva speech and entered into a secret pact about Abyssinia with Monsieur Laval.<sup>6</sup> This leaked out and came as a shock to the British public which had been given no time to adjust itself to the *volte face*. Sir Samuel had to go and Mr. Eden appeared on the scene.

But there was no great change in policy, and, despite the agitation of the public in England, the foreign office calmly continued on its pre-determined course. President Roosevelt's suggestion to introduce oil sanctions,<sup>7</sup> which could have crippled Italy, was ignored and instead the British-owned Anglo-Iranian Oil Company worked night and day to provide oil to Italy. The rape of Abyssinia was completed.

Meanwhile Hitler took advantage of the situation to advance and consolidate his position. France grew increasingly alarmed but England smiled, though sometimes protesting, at each step of Nazi Germany.

5. In his speech at Geneva on 11 September 1935, Sir Samuel Hoare reaffirmed his country's support to the League and the interest of the British people in collective security.

6. Pierre Laval (1883-1945); French politician; Prime Minister, 1931, and again in 1935-37; collaborated with the Nazis, 1940-41; tried for treason and executed after the war. Under the Hoare-Laval plan announced on 13 December 1935 for the settlement of the Italo-Abyssinian conflict, it was proposed to hand over to Italy the effective ownership and control of a half of Abyssinian territory. This plan aroused much indignation in Britain and Hoare resigned on 18 December 1935.

7. Roosevelt announced on 5 October 1935 a ban on export of arms, ammunition and implements of war to Italy and Ethiopia. But oil which was needed most by Italy was not classified as ammunition or an implement of war. Roosevelt, therefore, resorted to a moral embargo by appealing to American exporters to hold their shipments to Italy to normal pre-war levels.

The revolt in Spain followed, carefully engineered by Italy and Germany and with their help. This was the acid test. Here was a democratically elected government being attacked by a military clique at home aided by mercenaries and foreign powers. What would have Mr. Chamberlain done, as Mr. Lloyd George has recently asked, if Russia had fomented revolution in Spain? Would he have smiled at it and signed a pact with Stalin?

There was another difficulty—Britain's imperial interests were directly concerned here and there was danger to the empire if Spain passed into hostile hands. The balance of power in Europe would be completely upset, the Nazi-fascist bloc would gain a dominating position, France would be encircled, the Mediterranean would be controlled by enemy powers, Gibraltar could not hold out and the great trade routes would be seriously threatened. Still the foreign office pursued its old policy, for its aversion to the growth of democracy and socialism was greater even than its love of empire. Non-intervention, which meant helping Italian and German intervention and throttling the Spanish Republic, was proclaimed.

British ships were sunk in the Mediterranean and there was an outcry in England.<sup>8</sup> The foreign office was troubled at last and began to think that this immediate danger was perhaps greater than the social danger. For a brief while it showed firmness and at Nyon Mr. Eden announced that England would not tolerate this, and would take swift action if this piracy continued.<sup>9</sup> For the first time England was showing her teeth to the Nazi and fascist powers and there was an immediate improvement in the situation.

Mr. Eden and the foreign office had come to the conclusion that this change was necessary and for a brief while they had their way. But not for long for Mr. Neville Chamberlain thought otherwise. He was completely wedded to the wooing of Herr Hitler and Signor Mussolini, and he hated this new democratic Spain and even more so the Soviet Union. So Eden went and gave place to Lord Halifax.<sup>10</sup>

8. Unidentified submarines and aeroplanes sank several ships of Britain, France and other countries. Subsequently, on 14 September 1937, an agreement was signed at Nyon in Switzerland by nine powers including Britain and France for the immediate adoption of anti-piracy patrols.

9. In a broadcast from Geneva, Anthony Eden, British Foreign Secretary, declared: "the problem that confronted the powers at the Nyon conference was that of the masked highwayman who does not stop short of manslaughter or even murder. What we have done is to authorise the patrolling vessels to counter-attack and, if possible, destroy any submarine actually engaged in piracy."

10. Eden who became Foreign Secretary on 22 December 1935 resigned on 20 February 1938 because of differences on foreign policy with Chamberlain.



## II

The inner cabinet, after the resignation of Mr. Eden, consisting of the Prime Minister, Lord Halifax, Sir John Simon and Sir Samuel Hoare, had no dissenting voice to trouble them. They could follow the policy of 'appeasement' unchecked whatever the consequences to England and her empire. The dilemma did not trouble them for the most urgent task was not to irritate Hitler or Mussolini.

As Signor Mussolini was bent on destroying the Spanish Republic, the sooner this was done the better. The British Government hurried to conclude a pact with Signor Mussolini and compelled France to close her Spanish frontier. They waited impatiently for the Spanish Republic to expire but, to their great irritation, it refused to die. Indeed it seemed to gather new strength. Mr. Chamberlain looked rather ridiculous with his Anglo-Italian Pact and it became a point of honour with him to justify himself by doing everything to end the republic. If British ships were torpedoed or bombed, he justified this as the natural punishment for those who took the risk of taking food to the republic. The world was divided in sympathy over Spain. Fierce loyalties were aroused. There was no doubt on which side Mr. Chamberlain's loyalty lay.

The policy of appeasement continued. The centre of trouble shifted to central Europe. Hitler threatened Austria. Mr. Chamberlain publicly stated that he would not intervene in Austria. It was an invitation to Hitler and he promptly took advantage of it and marched in.

Czechoslovakia was threatened. The foreign office, perhaps forgetting Mr. Chamberlain, ordered the withdrawal of the British ambassador from Berlin if Germany invaded Czechoslovakia.<sup>11</sup> The Czechs mobilised overnight and the crisis of March 1938 passed. Herr Hitler was angry at this check to his plans. And so apparently were Mr. Chamberlain and Lord Halifax. The foreign office had taken the bit into its own teeth and spoilt the even tenor of appeasement. This could not be tolerated, and so Sir Robert Vansittart, the permanent head of the foreign office, was removed and promoted to some inconspicuous position, and his place was taken by Sir Horace Wilson.

Sir Horace was the right man to push appeasement. He was pro-Nazi and fiercely anti-Soviet. He was closely associated with the important and influential group which functioned on behalf of Nazi Germany in

11. Sir Neville Henderson (1882-1942); British diplomat, sympathetic to Hitler; author of *Failure of a Mission*. The British Government decided on 17 March 1938 to recall him.

England. There was the Cliveden set,<sup>12</sup> and the owner and the editor of *The Times*, and the pro-Franco enthusiasts. Small in numbers, they dominated the government and Mr. Neville Chamberlain was their especial pet. The fifth column was now in full control of England's foreign policy.

Step by step this policy developed in central Europe and in Spain. Lord Runciman was sent to break the back of the Czechs and encourage the Nazis. Munich came and the triumph of appeasement was complete. Mr. Chamberlain was the hero who had brought peace. There was deep tragedy in a million homes in Czechoslovakia and the concentration camps were full. A brave people had been betrayed by those they had looked upon as their friends. There was contempt for England and France all over the world. But what did this matter if the old game, to satisfy Hitler in the west and drive him to attack the Soviet, was progressing satisfactorily? The Soviet had been ignored and isolated. England was the best ally of Hitler and if all went well, a measure of fascism, of course under democratic garb, might be introduced in England also.

But all did not go well, although Spain, Republican Spain, that had shouldered the burden of the world's fight for freedom, lay stabbed to death by England and France. Mr. Chamberlain and his government had paid a heavy price and taken many risks and the time had come when the reward for this persistence in appeasement should come to them, the reward of a Germany, satiated in the west, turning east, and coming to grips with the Soviet. But the reward receded into the distance. There were still succulent morsels in the east and south-east of Europe which Hitler might pick up, but what then? Suddenly it became obvious that Germany had no intention of coming into conflict with the Soviet Union. She had too much respect for the Soviet's military machine, and no desire to get entangled in the vast areas of the Soviet country. It was easier to take the succulent morsels and then lock the backdoor in the east and turn west.

This was an alarming prospect. The whole edifice of appeasement was tottering. The price had been paid not only in the blood and suffering of millions, in the sacrifice of democracy, in the loss of respect

12. Cliveden was the home of the Astor family. Lady Astor's house parties there in the 1930s led to talk of the 'Cliveden set' to which belonged Geoffrey Dawson, editor of *The Times*, J.L. Garvin, editor of the *Observer*, and Lord Lothian. In the late 1930s the 'Cliveden set' greatly influenced the shaping of the policy of appeasement.



and prestige, but also in the handing over of vital strategic points to the potential enemies. And nothing had been received in exchange. Well might the men in power in England and France think sorrowfully of the lost legions of Czechoslovakia, of the great Skoda works<sup>13</sup> which might have worked for them and now would produce munitions for the enemy. Well might they regret bitterly what they had done in Spain.

The final end of the Czech state, the absorption of Memel into Germany,<sup>14</sup> the invasion of Albania, followed each other rapidly.<sup>15</sup> There was mounting alarm in England and even the Tories grumbled and threatened to revolt against the policy of appeasement. There was much talk of democracy in danger, that democracy which had been twice killed by these very people in Czechoslovakia and in Spain. It was not love of democracy or freedom that moved the Tories but fear of losing their empire and perhaps their own country's freedom. The old dilemma faced them with added force now. Shall we safeguard our empire by stopping and destroying the fascists, or should we continue to safeguard our social system by avoiding war and following the policy of appeasement through further concessions and further vacillation? These concessions had so far been at other peoples' cost but the time had come when payment might have to be made out of one's own living flesh. Munich and what followed had terribly weakened England and France; any further appeasement might enfeeble them so much as to make resistance difficult. Russia, the one power that might save them, was sullen and angry and in no mood to fall into any trap.

The immediate danger was too great to be ignored, and the other danger to the social system took a second place. There was a great outcry in England that appeasement must be given up and a firm line adopted against Nazi Germany and fascist Italy in cooperation with Soviet Russia. Mr. Neville Chamberlain, clever politician that he is, bowed to the blast and declared a change in policy. There were rejoicings everywhere and a nightmare seemed to have ended.

But had Mr. Chamberlain changed his policy? He had given guarantees to Poland and Rumania, guarantees which he could not effectively honour without Soviet aid. The choice was to approach the Soviet and

13. A well-equipped arms factory in Czechoslovakia; after March 1939, it provided sophisticated military equipment to Nazi forces.
14. On 22 March 1939, the Lithuanian Parliament ratified the transfer of Memel to Germany.
15. On 7 April 1939 (Good Friday), Italian troops landed at four Albanian ports and occupied the entire country in two days.

come to an agreement with it,<sup>16</sup> or, when the hour came, to forget the guarantee and betray again.

### III

Had Mr. Chamberlain changed? This was unlikely. He is a stubborn man with firm ideas about foreign policy, and, despite everything that had happened in central Europe and Spain, he had stuck to that policy. His governing passion was dislike of Russia and all that the Soviet stands for. Was he going to get rid of his complexes and his prejudices and admit the failure of his policy? This was highly unlikely, and his past record of dishonoured assurances and double-crossing had left little faith in his political honesty. Even if he declared a change in policy, how many would believe him?

But his acts spoke more loudly than his words and made it clear that he stuck as of old to appeasement. In spite of Albania he continued with the Anglo-Italian Treaty.<sup>17</sup> In spite of the tragedy and horror of Spain and her starving refugees, his representative graced Franco's victory parade in Madrid.<sup>18</sup> Sir Neville Henderson, that pro-Nazi champion of appeasement, was sent back to his ambassador's post in Berlin—there to be insulted by Von Ribbentrop,<sup>19</sup> who was too busy to see him. *The Times* of London, in its own mischievous way, suggested that Danzig was not worth fighting for and so, as in the case of the Sudetenland last year, invited Germany to take possession of it.<sup>20</sup> It is notorious that *The Times* represents in such matters Mr. Chamberlain and Lord Halifax. In the House of Commons Mr. Chamberlain refuses to give an

16. The Anglo-Soviet negotiations finally broke down when Britain and Poland could not agree with the Russian demand that she should move her troops across north Poland and Galicia in order to forestall an attack.
17. Speaking in the House of Commons on 13 April 1939, Chamberlain stated: "No doubt some would say that we should now declare that the Anglo-Italian agreement must be considered at an end. I do not take that view myself."
18. The victory parade celebrating Franco's triumph in the civil war was held at Madrid on 19 May 1939.
19. Joachim Von Ribbentrop (1893-1948); Nazi diplomat and politician; German ambassador to Britain, 1936; Foreign Minister under the Nazis, 1938-45; tried as war criminal at Nuremburg and executed.
20. Germany demanded the return to the Reich of Danzig, and with the invasion of Poland on 1 September 1939, the reunion of Danzig with the German Reich was proclaimed.



assurance that he will not recognise the conquest of Bohemia and Moravia.<sup>21</sup> There are inspired hints in the press that another Munich is coming.<sup>22</sup> The fifth column is hard at work again and appeasement flourishes.

Meanwhile, taking advantage of the feeling of alarm, Mr. Chamberlain has introduced conscription.<sup>23</sup> What is the true meaning of this? A British general declared recently that conscription was very useful to suppress opposition elements in England. Mr. Chamberlain is following the road to internal fascism in Britain under cover of war preparations and he is likely to succeed. The press will be censored and kept strictly in control and public life will be restricted. The pro-fascist elements in England would even court defeat in war rather than ally themselves to the Soviet Union and the other progressive forces. That is the policy Mr. Chamberlain is bent on carrying on, and is in fact pursuing.

But there are powerful elements in England, including some leaders of the Tory Party, which disagree with this policy and want an alliance with the Soviet to combat Nazi Germany. Mr. Chamberlain has to soothe them and carries on negotiations with the Soviet for this purpose. His proposals to Russia were cleverly designed to make her pull his chestnuts out of the fire. Russia refused and proposed a real treaty against all aggression. If Mr. Chamberlain was really anxious to stop aggression he should have no difficulty in accepting such a treaty. But he has no such anxiety. His sole motive force seems to be to make the world safe for fascism and to line up England with the fascist countries.

It may be that the pressure of events and his own people may compel him to come to terms with the Soviet. Even so, who is to trust him? He will not forsake his dearly-loved policy of appeasement, and he will betray his friends and allies as he has done before. Even if war breaks out and England is involved in it under Mr. Chamberlain's leadership,

21. On 15 March 1939, Bohemia and Moravia were declared by the Reich as its protectorates because they had "for thousand years belonged to the *lebensraum* of the German people". Referring to the guarantee given to Czechoslovakia on 4 October 1936 that "His Majesty's Government would certainly feel bound to take all steps in their power to see that the integrity of Czechoslovakia is preserved", Mr. Chamberlain said: "In our opinion the situation has radically altered since the Slovak Diet declared the independence of Slovakia. The effect of this declaration was put to an end by internal disruption to the state whose frontiers we had proposed to guarantee...."
22. A Washington report stated that on the basis of diplomatic and other information, the U.S. Government felt that the totalitarian states intended to force on the democracies "another Munich".
23. The British Government's plan for compulsory military service was announced by Chamberlain on 26 April 1939 and was approved by Parliament the next day.

there is no certainty that appeasement will end. Munichs may come during that war. Some able observers are of opinion that it is highly likely that after a few weeks of carnage, when the nerves of the people are thoroughly shaken up, Mr. Chamberlain may be offered and might accept an advantageous separate peace, ensuring fascism at home and abroad. The war would help in establishing the apparatus for internal fascism.

In France today there is a military dictatorship and the Chamber of Deputies does not count for much.<sup>24</sup> Certain democratic liberties are allowed to continue but they are at the mercy of the authorities. France that denied arms and even food to the Spanish Republic is now pouring in arms to Franco. All the arms that the republican troops left in France are being given to Franco. The Spanish gold that was in Paris and was not given to the republic, is also being handed over to Franco, and Franco belongs to the Berlin-Rome Axis. Is this an abandonment of appeasement? Is this the way to build up a democratic peace front?

Let us be clear about it. The same old policy of appeasement continues and the same old betrayals will follow. For the fear of social change is greater than any other fear in the minds of those who govern England and France. So long as Mr. Chamberlain is in control, there will be no essential change, and even if events force his hands, he will hanker after his old way and return to it whenever he can.

But in the minds even of the governing classes of England there is this dilemma: shall we safeguard our empire by stopping fascist aggression and destroying fascism, or safeguard our social system by avoiding war at all costs and giving further concessions to Nazi Germany and fascist Italy? Mr. Chamberlain has no doubt about his answer. He sticks to the social system and to fascism.

We in India have no such dilemma, for we want the end of that empire as well as of that social system. And so whether war comes now or is delayed, we cannot take part in it, except as a free country making a free choice in favour of real democracy and peace. There is or can be neither democracy nor peace under Mr. Chamberlain's lead or under British imperialist control. That is the way of fascism and betrayal of democracy. That way can only lead to the further exploitation and humiliation of India.

24. The Chamber of Deputies adopted a bill introduced on 17 March 1939, which gave the Daladier government special and undefined powers to decree measures for the reinforcement of national defence.



It is an irony of fate that Mr. Neville Chamberlain should pose as the leader of British democracy when he believes in fascism, and has done perhaps more than any other person to enfeeble democracy; that Monsieur Daladier should be the dictator of France, and that Lord Halifax and the pro-Nazi Monsieur Bonnet should be foreign ministers of England and France. Is it from these people that democracy will seek inspiration or hope for deliverance? How petty they all look before a great democratic figure like Roosevelt.

But we should not be misled by these false prophets of democracy. Democracy for us means freedom for our people. That is our acid test.

## 28. The New China<sup>1</sup>

The news agencies feed us with news of Europe and of what Herr Hitler says or Mr. Neville Chamberlain denies. We hear little about China except that an air raid has taken place and there have been hundreds or thousands of casualties. It is one of our many unfortunate disabilities that we depend almost entirely for our foreign news service on a British agency which looks at news not from our point of view but definitely from the British imperialist viewpoint. Its offices in London decide what is good for us to have and a restricted measure of this is poured out to us from day to day. What Lord Zetland or someone else says may be interesting, but it is not exactly world news. Reuter's, however, still think that we wait eagerly for the golden words that fall from the mouths of the big officials of the India Office. Meanwhile, real world news for which we hanker is denied to us.

Any person who has travelled East, to Malaya or Java, knows the tremendous difference between the news supply there and in India. Fresh news pours in there about China, the Far East, America and even Europe, and not only fresh news but a fresh outlook, which is a pleasant change after the Reuter service. This fresh news comes through the American agencies which unfortunately do not reach India.

So we hear little in India about China. Fortunately the *Herald* has made a particular feature of news from China and although it does not

1. Signed article written at Allahabad, 15 June 1939. *National Herald*, 18 June 1939. Reprinted in *China, Spain and the War*, (Allahabad, 1940), pp. 11-15.

get them telegraphically, it publishes frequently special articles on conditions in China. There is no lack of news if only we can get it, for China today is news in every sense of the word.

She is news because what is happening in China is of enormous significance to the world, to Asia, and to India. China is one of the key countries of the world, and in the world perspective, she counts more than the small warring countries of Europe. In any event, to Asia and to us in India, she and her future are of prime importance.

China is news also because of the vast scale of horrible destruction that the Japanese armies have perpetrated there. Do we realise what the small news items that we read mean? Daily bombing of great cities, the killing of tens of thousands, the cruelty and inhumanity of modern warfare.

But, above all, she is news because of her heroic resistance and the way she has overcome the tremendous difficulties she had to face. Only a great people could have done that; a great people, not merely because they are the heirs to a great past, but because they have established their claim to the future. It is difficult in this changing world to prophesy, but every indication points to China emerging victorious from her present trials. In a military sense, she is stronger today, after two years of warfare, than she was at the commencement of the war. She is hardened, better organised, better equipped, and she has developed a kind of warfare which suits her technical inferiority and her wide spaces. The morale of her people is excellent, and the army and the peasantry pull together in a common undertaking. Most of the old generals, timid, compromising and incompetent, have given place to younger men trained in the hard field of experience. The old ones were politically irremovable to begin with, but when disasters came and their incompetence was manifest, they had to go.

Today it is well recognised in foreign military circles, and this includes the German war chiefs, that unless something very extraordinary occurs, China will win, though it may take her time to do so. The Chinese people and their leaders do not underrate their task. They take the long view and say that, so far as they are concerned, the war has just begun.

What extraordinary event can occur which might imperil China's chances? It is highly unlikely that Japan by herself can succeed in crushing Chinese resistance. But if the United States of America or England deliberately adopted an anti-Chinese policy, it might make a difference. The United States will not do so for it will go counter to their whole Far Eastern policy. What of England? The England of Mr. Neville Chamberlain is capable of anything. Today, however, she is definitely pro-Chinese. What she will be tomorrow only Mr. Chamberlain knows.



Behind the war and inhumanity and violence, there is something happening in China which is of vital significance. A new China is rising, rooted in her culture, but shedding the lethargy and weaknesses of ages, strong and united, modern and with a human outlook. The unity that China has achieved in these years of trial is astonishing and inspiring. It is not merely unity in defence, but a unity in work and in building up. Behind the war fronts, in the vast undeveloped hinterland of China, there are vast schemes afoot which are changing the face of the country. In spite of continuous danger of bombing from the air, industries are growing up, and what is especially interesting, a scheme of cooperatives for the small and cottage industries is taking rapid shape, even within ear-shot of the guns. The great advantage of these cottage and small industries is that they can be quickly established in the devastated regions, and can be moved if danger threatens.

This is the new China that is growing up in the smoke of war and in the midst of devastation on an unparalleled scale. We have much to learn from her.

## 29. Spain—A Year Ago<sup>1</sup>

A year ago, or to be more accurate, a year and a week ago, on June 14, 1938, we landed at Genoa. We had decided to go to Spain, Republican Spain, as quickly as we could manage it, and so we left immediately by air for Marseilles and flew over the winding and beautiful coastline of the Riviera. Passport and police formalities had to be attended to in Marseilles and, without taking rest or food, we went to various offices there, being referred by one to the other. I had a special visa for Spain

1. This and the following three articles written by Jawaharlal on his visit to Spain in 1938 were first printed in the *National Herald* on 25 June, 30 June, 9 July and 23 July 1939, and later reprinted in *China, Spain and the War*, (Allahabad, 1940), pp. 59-85, with the following note by him: "These essays, written a year after my visit to warring Spain, were attempts to capture and imprison in the written word the impressions I had gathered there. Unfortunately, as is usual with me, I had kept no record and made no notes, and impressions fade with the lapse of time and memory plays strange tricks. And yet those impressions were vivid enough and much has remained in my mind and will remain, even though the stock of fresh horror and disaster overlays them. I could not finish, as I had intended, this writing down of past experiences. This is thus an unfinished fragment."

and we held a letter from the Spanish Government inviting us to visit them and charging their representatives to give us every facility and help.

Armed with these we thought that no difficulties would come our way. But we were mistaken, and hour after hour we rushed from one corner of Marseilles to another, from one bureau to a second one and then to a third, only to be sent on to yet another. We discovered that more photographs were necessary and so we searched for and found a photographer, who did the work in a few minutes with his automatic machine.

My visa for Spain was not good enough, I was told by the lady in charge of one office. It was written in English and why should a French office take cognizance of the English language? I offered to translate the few words but the lady was adamant. So we went to the British consulate and obtained another visa, this time in French, and returned to the determined lady of the bureau. But, we were told, you have not paid the fee yet. We offered to do so and she smiled disdainfully at our ignorance. The fee had to be paid at some police office some miles away and the receipt for it brought to the passports bureau.

We had to obey the voice of authority and to the police office we went and made payment and brought back the receipt in triumph. What, said the lady, you have only paid half the proper amount. This is not good enough. Evidently we had misunderstood her or somebody had made a mistake. There was no help for it but to go back wearily to the police office again. We had to hurry for the time for the closing of the bureau was near.

At last the right sum was paid, the proper receipt obtained, and the lady of the bureau, taking pity at our distress, smiled at us and gave us the stamp of authority. She had kept her bureau open for us, though evening had crept in and all other offices had closed down for the day.

And now remained the Spanish consulate, for its permission was also necessary, and there we went, fearing that it may have closed for the day. Closed it was, but the papers we had worked wonders and the locked doors opened and we were given warm welcome.

At last we had got what we wanted. Night was falling and we were tired out, hungry and sleepy. The Spanish consul joined us at dinner but we were poor company and all we could think of was bed and sleep.

So ended our first day in Europe. The early dawn of the next day, at four thirty in the morning, we hastened to the aerodrome to take the plane to Barcelona. The deep-blue Mediterranean lay under us and the coastline of Spain stretched out in the distance. Soon we were flying over Spanish soil and we tried to discover signs of war and destruction. There were none to be seen from that height and peace seemed to reign over the land.



We reached our destination, the airport of Barcelona, a few miles from the city. Some mistake had been made, there was no one to meet us, and for a while we did not quite know what to do. After some waiting a motor bus carried us to the city. We passed between rich and smiling fields, and occasionally there were houses in ruins by the roadside, apparently bombed from the air. But the aspect was peaceful and men and women were working in the fields.

Barcelona appeared in the distance, spread out along the coast and going right into the interior, clinging to the petty hills that dotted the landscape. It had a gracious appearance as it lay basking in the sunshine. Full of years and experience she seemed, with the burden of long history behind her, and yet strong and vital, smiling a warm welcome, despite her present sorrow, to the stranger who approached her.

We crept into her broad boulevards and the streets were full of people, laughing and gay, hurrying to their work or business. The trams, crowded with passengers, were going to and fro; the shops were open; the theatres and cinemas and concert-houses apparently flourished. Amazed, we looked at this moving scene of a great city's life. Was this the capital of a war government struggling for life against foreign invasion and domestic reaction, with the fronts only a few miles away, and life hovering over the edge of death? Was this the city which was daily bombed from the air and which was continually facing death from the skies?

The evidence of war was obvious enough. Huge structures lay in ruins, exposing their charred interiors. Streets and pavements were torn up by the bombs that fell on them, and gaping chasms stared at us. The shops though open were poorly supplied and there were no luxury goods to be seen. Men's clothes and women's were old and often worn out. The soldier in uniform was everywhere in evidence. And though the people laughed, as Spaniards will, their faces were grave and pinched, and sorrow hung in the air. The women of Spain, wrapped in their mantillas, graceful and attractive as ever, with the smile lurking at the corner of their mouths, had anxiety in their dark eyes. Hatless they went, for hats were unnecessary luxuries and they had abandoned them in token of their new freedom. But whether they were gay or sorrowful, there was pride in their looks and gait, and determination.

We reached our hotel, the Hotel Majestic, and telephoned immediately to the foreign office. Very soon a young lady from the ministry of propaganda and publicity came over to see us, profuse with apologies. Very efficient and charming she was, and she took charge of us and made arrangements for our stay and programme. During our brief stay in Barcelona she was our guide and friend and gave thought to every detail connected with our visit.

Five days we spent in this beautiful city, and five nights to the accompaniment of aerial bombardment. Five days and nights, crowded with events and impressions, the memory of which will endure.

## II

Was it only a year ago that I was in Spain? Ages have gone by since then with all their burden of shock and sorrow, and the counting of time by the passage of the sun and the moon seems a poor and unreal measure of the flood of emotions and experiences that add to our years. The men and women that I met in Spain, brave and gracious and vital, emblems of a nation's hope, are phantom figures today. Many are dead, many others are wandering refugees. But memory's storehouse is crowded by them and by the impressions I gathered during those brief days in Spain. Sometimes these impressions are so vivid that it seems but yesterday that I was there, and sometimes it seems a thousand years ago, and I feel old, very old. Time is a strange, elusive companion for us, but memory's tricks are stranger still, the haunting memory of things long forgotten, the sudden and fleeting glimpses into the world of the unconscious, the faint impress of the early days of the race and of humanity itself. Very old are we men, and the whisper of Eve's nightingales still sounds in our ears and dreams of Eden disturb us; and the tragedies of past ages bear us down.

We met many people in Barcelona and the neighbourhood and some of them stand out, vivid and living pictures in the mind. And yet the individual lost significance in the mass phenomena that we saw. In the early days of the revolt, as we had read and were told, the government and the people were totally unprepared. Chaos reigned everywhere, government offices did not function, the army, such as it was, went to pieces. Yet behind this chaos there was a fierce will to resist, and the people, unarmed or badly armed, hurled themselves at the advancing enemy. They put an end to the dreams of an easy victory which General Franco nourished, and checked his armies in many places. Madrid was saved by a supreme effort, and for two years the flag of the republic proudly flew over its battlements, although the enemy occupied the outskirts and bombed the city almost daily.

But the checks could only be momentary unless they were backed by trained armies and munitions. The value of human courage and endurance is immeasurable but, in terms of modern warfare, they cannot survive trained armies with their machine-guns and tanks and bombing aircraft. So Franco's armies advanced. They consisted largely of



Moorish troops and Italians and Germans, and were fed by a plentiful supply of munitions from Italy and Germany. Two highly efficient general staffs, the German and the Italian, controlled their major operations and supplied them with competent generalship. The problem before the Spanish republican government was to build up a new army under peculiarly difficult circumstances, when they were fighting with their backs to the wall, and were being harassed by the non-intervention policy of England and France. They had to organise government departments anew and to provide for food and clothing for the army and the people.

It was a vast problem even for peace time; with a life and death struggle going on, it seemed almost beyond human capacity. Yet the leaders of the republic tackled it and, in spite of every difficulty and discouragement, stuck to it. Internal conflicts weakened them and delayed progress. When I reached Spain I saw the result of two years' continuous effort and it was an astonishing sight for me. The old chaos and comic opera situation had given place to the ordered functioning of an efficient government and a magnificent army had been built up almost out of nothing.

I visited many government offices and met the ministers and heads of departments, though unfortunately I did not meet Senor Negrin,<sup>2</sup> the Prime Minister, who was away in Madrid during my stay in Barcelona. These offices were humming with ordered activity, which is the sign of efficiency. There was no slackness visible or indolence, nor excited haste. The people in charge went about their business with a quiet enthusiasm. They were often new to their tasks and their manner was different and more informal than that of an old civil servant who had become a part of the machine itself. But the changing circumstances required adaptability which the civil servant type seldom possesses. This adaptability they had, and what they lacked in experience they made up by their keenness at their work and their desire to get things done. After a few days' observation, it would be improper for me to pass judgment. But the general impression I gathered was one of surprising efficiency and coordination. There must have been, and indeed were, conflicts and failings, but they were not obvious on the surface.

The food problem was grave. There was the army to be fed, and the populations of great cities, and the vast number of refugees from Franco's territories. There was no milk to be seen or butter, and of both meat and vegetables and bread there was a lack. We could judge of this by the kind of food we ourselves got as guests of the government in the best

2. Lopez Juan Negrin (1889-1956); Prime Minister of republican Spain, 1937-39.

hotel of Barcelona. Our breakfast consisted of a cup of black coffee with half a small roll of bread, without any other accompaniment. At lunch and dinner we had one meagre course accompanied by a green vegetable. Even potatoes were not to be had. If that was the lot of the favoured ones, what of the others? A reception was given in our honour by the President or Speaker of the Cortes (the Spanish Parliament). The refreshments supplied consisted mainly of one or two varieties of sandwiches.

But though food was scarce and was growing scarce, the army could not be kept hungry and their demands were first supplied. Next came the children who got such milk as there was. There were vast numbers of children among the refugees and scores of children's colonies had been established by the government. We visited one of these, situated in a fine villa with a garden attached, and there we saw the children at work and play in pleasant surroundings. Many of them were orphans from distant parts of the country, and shock and disaster had come to their homes and left their impress upon them. But the lady in charge of them knew her job well and, with gentleness and affection, she trained them to live their communal life in the colony. Little details were attended to in order to give an aesthetic background to the child. The rooms were simply but agreeably furnished, and even the bed-linen was cunningly devised to please the child.

Apart from the children's colonies or homes, where children lived as at a boarding school, there were children's dining halls in some parts of the city where any child who came would be fed. Such establishments, we were told, were usually started by some organisation or by the soldiers at the front, with the help of the municipality. This, and such-like contacts, brought the new army very close to the people. We were fortunate in being present at the opening ceremony of one such children's dining hall. Lister's famous division in the army had fathered it and representative officers and men from the division with their band came to take part in the ceremony. The soldiers looked to the people to feed them; the soldiers, in their turn, wanted to help in feeding the children of the people. In this dining hall three thousand children could be fed daily.

The dining hall was a pleasant sight with cheerful decorations on the walls. Rows of girls neatly dressed in blue with caps and aprons welcomed the guests and children that came. These girls were the voluntary workers who would serve the children in the hall. Outside and inside the hall, crowds of excited children stood by, full of animation and expectation.



The night before the ceremony, Barcelona had experienced three air raids and some of the bombs had fallen in that particular area, not far from the new children's dining hall whose opening we were witnessing.

### III

On our second day in Barcelona we left early in the morning for the front and remained there till late in the evening. It was a two-hour drive, and armed with permits and accompanied by a Spanish officer, we had no difficulty in passing the numerous checking-places beyond which ordinary traffic was not allowed. The villages we passed through bore evident signs of war, but more significant than these visible emblems was the very atmosphere of the place. The air was heavy with that ominous quiet which apparently lies behind the battle line. Life is still there and does not run its normal course, and waits for the periodic outbursts of infernal noise.

We went to Lister's headquarters. We had heard a great deal of Lister and Modesto, two army commanders who had risen rapidly from the ranks and were now among the republic's most trusted generals. Next to General Miaja,<sup>3</sup> the gallant defender of Madrid, these two appeared to be the best known and popular. Miaja was of the old guard, a professional army officer who stuck to the republic when a great part of the army rebelled. But Modesto and Lister were civilians at the time, following very modest and non-martial vocations. One was a tailor, the other a mason. They joined up when the call came for men for the new army to fight the rebels and soon showed remarkable capacity. They rose by successive steps rapidly from the ranks and in two years' time, when I visited Spain, each of them was commanding a hundred thousand men and had a brilliant record of achievement in the war to his credit.

We just missed meeting Modesto and were sorry for this. But Lister we saw and spent the best part of the afternoon with him, sharing in his frugal meal. He was an impressive person with a frank, attractive face, like that of a boy who has grown up quickly into manhood. A curious mixture of boyishness and grown-up-ness he was, his light-hearted and infectious laughter giving place to gravity. The responsibility on him was great and the burdens he had to carry heavy. From day to day he had to face difficult situations, and where the danger was greatest and the enemy were advancing, he or Modesto were hurried to confront

3. General Jose Miaja (1878-1958); republican commander of Madrid during the Spanish civil war.

them. Yet he did not lose his charm or gaiety and his whole bearing radiated self-confidence and assurance. He was the happy warrior whom nothing seemed to dismay and who was a pillar of strength when the outlook was darkest.

I watched him closely for I wanted to find out what these new officers of the popular army were like. We know the old military type, a stern disciplinarian, usually limited in intelligence and wedded to routine, living in the past and hating innovations which upset his conceptions of warfare. This type proved a dismal failure during the last Great War, but yet to a large extent he dominates armies. We know this type well in India and we often have to suffer platitudinous advice from him. Have we not been told often enough by him that it will take generations before Indians can grow up into his semblance (if they can ever reach these resplendent heights) and become senior officers. Alas for this old type which shines so much at polo and bridge and on the parade ground, but is so out of place today. He has had his day and has to give place to the mechanic and the engineer and the highbrow who understands the intricacies of modern mechanised warfare. He will have to give place to the soldier who does not form a superior class apart, far removed from the rank and file, but is the commander of popular forces, maintaining the discipline that is essential to an army, and yet one in comradeship with those he commands.

It was this new type that I saw in Lister. He introduced me to many officers and took me to an officers' training school, and everywhere I sensed the new atmosphere of informality and comradeship and the strong binding link of a cause which they were pledged to defend. Yet there was discipline. In this school I noticed the care that was taken to give political education to the officers. Even after they left their school and joined their regiments this education was not neglected for each regiment had a political commissar attached to it, whose advice on the political aspects of any question that arose was always sought by the commander. It was the business of the commissar to keep up the morale of the troops.

One of the most notable feats of the Spanish Republic was to build up within two years a very fine army with thousands of competent officers. If the republic fell in the end, it was not this army that failed. It was hunger that killed it and the treachery of England and France. The old officers, with a few notable exceptions like Miaja, proved unreliable and incompetent, as in the case of China. Many of the defeats were due to these old officers but as the new popular type officer grew in numbers, the army stiffened. One thing the new officers lacked and that was long training in strategy. They had no time to learn much of theory from



books. Their school-house was too often the battlefield itself. They learned much from this and improved rapidly, but for the superior officers it was a much more difficult task to get used to the quick handling of masses of men as the fortunes of a battle changed and new situations developed. Therein they could not compare with the highly trained German and Italian staffs which directed operations on Franco's side.

This was a serious handicap to the republic but it got over it progressively, and out of the crowd of its officers, some exceptionally able men, like Modesto and Lister, were thrown out. As against this handicap, the republic had a far superior rank and file, and more competent and eager officers of middle rank. Given enough food and munitions, there can be no doubt that the new republican army would have triumphed over Franco's professionals and experts, in spite of their German and Italian staffs and superiority in heavy armaments and aircraft.

I was greatly impressed by this new army and its training. We were taken then to see the International Brigade<sup>4</sup> which had won so much fame during the war. This had been originally composed entirely of foreign volunteers, but when I visited them, sixty per cent of them were Spaniards. The republican government was discouraging foreign volunteers from joining as their object was to demonstrate that they were contending against an invasion of Spain by outsiders—Germans and Italians and Moors—and were not fighting in a civil war in which foreign elements were merely assisting. Always, in Barcelona, the war was referred to as an invasion and not as a civil war. We could not easily trace the International Brigade. It was extraordinary that while large armies were encamped in the neighbourhood, they were not visible and the countryside seemed almost deserted, except for small groups of soldiers or sentries and a military lorry rushing by. The aeroplane had made all the difference and the fear of bombing was a sufficient inducement for avoiding all public display. So the troops lived and worked under cover and their guns were camouflaged. The hillside was swarming with them but only the trees and the shrubs were visible from a short distance.

The International Brigade was spread out over a wide area and we had no time to visit each section of it. We went to the British and American battalions, and once we had spotted them, we found large numbers of soldiers on the sides of the hills and in the valley below. They were camping under most primitive conditions and had made temporary huts out of mud and shrubs or had dug out a small shelter. There

4. The International Brigade, consisting of young men from all parts of Europe, arrived in Madrid on 7 November 1936. By January 1938, the International Brigade was incorporated into the republican army.

was nothing in the way of comfort, and yet they were the jolliest crowd I have come across. Their spirits were infectious and watching their enthusiasm and determination, it was difficult to conceive that the cause they served could ever lose.

We talked to many of them. They had come as volunteers from distant places, drawn by that strange attraction for serving a cause which has moved men and women throughout the ages. They had left their families and homes, their work and their comforts, and of their own free will chosen this hard life, with danger as their constant companion, and death a frequent visitor. As I watched them laugh and play, my mind travelled back to two years of warfare and the proud record of this brigade during these terrible years of misfortune and disaster. They had saved the republic many a time and thousands of them lay buried in the soil of Spain. How many of those light-hearted youths I saw would never return to their homes again and their loved ones would wait for them in vain?

Only a few days after I saw them, they were in the battle-line again, and a little later they were rushed to the Ebro to stem the fierce onslaught of Franco's armies.<sup>5</sup> Many remained there for ever, among them some whom I remembered as having taken my autograph.

Reluctantly I came away from these gallant men of the International Brigade, for something in me wanted to stay on this inhospitable-looking hillside which sheltered so much human courage, so much of what was worthwhile in life.

We were taken away to the headquarters of a Spanish brigade. It was Modesto's I think, although Modesto was not there at the time. In our honour all the officers had gathered together and we feasted on simple fare. It was difficult to remember in that cheerful company that the battle-line was not far and an unwelcome bomb might disturb our harmony. The toast of India and of Indian freedom was drunk after a happy speech by a Spanish officer. I replied in a few words of thanks and of goodwill to the republic and its fine army.

And so back in the starlight to Barcelona.

#### IV

Lister was one of the outstanding men we met in Spain. Yet another was Senor Del Vayo, then the foreign minister of the republic. Soon after our arrival in Barcelona we went to call on him, and on subsequent

5. The battle of the Ebro started in July 1938. Despite initial advances, the republicans were defeated by Franco's army on 14 November 1938.



days we met on several occasions. He was not the usual type of diplomat, reserved and suave, afraid of saying anything definite, with a long training in the arts of diplomacy behind him. He was a journalist and a writer whom the revolution had thrown up into the front rank of public life and he carried something of the journalist still about him. His ability was undoubted, but what struck me most was his vitality and determination. In Madrid and Barcelona and in Geneva, he had fought for the republic against all odds and tried to counter the tortuous devices of 'non-intervention'. During the dark days of March 1938, and when the long-drawn-out battle of the Ebro was taking place in the summer of 1938, he had been a rock and a lighthouse for the people of the republic. Next to Dr. Negrin, the Prime Minister, he was the key man of the government. These two never lost heart or courage or nerve, whatever disaster or misfortune confronted their cause. Seldom has the head of a state shown such superb nerve as when Dr. Negrin, at the height of the Ebro offensive, went off to attend a scientists' congress in Zurich.

Del Vayo and I had long talks with each other, and he explained to me the position in Spain with frankness, not ignoring or minimising his difficulties. In a military sense, he was satisfied with the progress made by the new army, but there was a lack of good staff work. Many of their defeats and retirements were due, apart of course from the great superiority of the enemy in aircraft and mechanical equipment and big guns, to inexperience of the republican generals in large-scale operations, and sometimes to deliberate sabotage on the part of the old officers who had been employed by the republic. This sabotage was more harmful than the inexperience; it was growing less as the officers of the new army gradually replaced the doubtful ones. Inexperience was often a costly business, but experience was being purchased on the field of battle and mistakes were fewer. The new army increased in efficiency from day to day and, from this point of view, time was a factor in favour of the republic.

A few weeks after my visit to Spain, Franco's armies launched with all their strength, and in full cooperation with their German and Italian allies, a fierce offensive on the Ebro. This battle of the Ebro lasted for several weeks and was one of the major battles of modern times. But our standards of measurement have grown today and the battle has become just an incident in a minor war. In this battle of the Ebro, the republican army thoroughly justified itself and proved itself superior to Franco's. In spite of lack of aircraft and munitions, it held the oft-repeated assaults of massed armies supported by aircraft.

Del Vayo was not worried about the army. He was worried about the supply of munitions and, even more so, of food. The coming winter was a critical period for food. Food and munitions very largely depended on

the policy of England and France, and the governments of these two countries have been consistently, in the name of non-intervention, following a policy of strangling the republic and indirectly aiding Franco.

Munich and all that followed was yet to come, and our senses had not then been completely dulled by repeated betrayal and mendacity. But the farce of this 'non-intervention' was an astonishing thing and showed up how rotten were the standards and methods of international affairs. Non-intervention in Spain was the parent of Munich.

Del Vayo did not use a hard word about Franco before me. He dismissed him airily as a tool of the Nazis and fascists, who were the real enemies and invaders of his country. Even about Germany and Italy he was not bitter. But there was no lack of bitterness when he talked of the British and French Governments who, under the guise of friendship, were doing so much to kill republican Spain. Especially bitter he was against Mr. Chamberlain's government for he considered the French Government to be completely under the influence of Downing Street. Del Vayo told me that, although he could not say so publicly, he and his government were being compelled to consider the British Government as an unfriendly one, aiding the enemy. Within a few days of our talk, the French Government, at the instance of the British, closed the Pyrenese frontier, a fatal step, intended to appease Mussolini, which did more harm to the republican cause than any battle that Franco had won.

We talked of India also, Del Vayo and I, and I presented him with our national flag. Several months later, in that fateful last week of September, when Mr. Chamberlain and his umbrella were carrying appeasement by air to Godesberg, I met Del Vayo again in Geneva. The food problem was growing acute and he begged of me to help in sending food supplies from India. My last glimpse of him was at the midnight hour in a famous cafe in Geneva where politicians and journalists congregate to discuss the latest news and the latest scandal in high politics. They have plenty of material since 'appeasement' descended upon us to put in the shade the franker intrigues of the days of Machiavelli.

The third arresting personality that I met in Spain was that of Dolores,<sup>6</sup> popularly known as Passionaria. I had often heard of her and was anxious to meet her. She had been unwell and we paid a visit to her little chamber. For an hour or so we were with her and we had to converse through an interpreter. Her extraordinary vitality overwhelmed me and I felt that she was one of the most remarkable women I had met. She was a miner's daughter from the Basque country, middle-aged and homely looking, the mother of grown-up children. Her face was pleasant and

6. Dolores Ibarruri (b. 1895); prominent Spanish communist leader.



genial. It was a happy matron's face, smiling easily, and yet behind it lay the infinite sorrow of her class and her nation. In repose, her face was restful but with a hint of turmoil beneath the surface. And then she would begin to speak. Impassioned words would pour out of her lips, tumbling over each other, her face would be lighted up by the fire within, and her fine eyes would sparkle and hold you. I heard her in a little room, only understanding part of what she was saying in Spanish, but the music of her language filled me, and her changing face and eyes were full of meaning. I understood then the power that she wielded over the Spanish masses. If, I wondered, she could thus impress me, who is not easily impressed, what effect would she have on a mass audience of her own people?

A month or so later I met Passionaria in Paris and I saw her addressing a great meeting. She spoke in Spanish and the audience was overwhelmingly French and could not easily follow her. But she held that great audience as few orators could have done, and when the meeting was over, there was an endless succession of women and girls and sometimes men, who came with flowers for her in their hands or gifts for Spain. Their tear-laden eyes were full of love for her and often they broke down when she embraced them and bade them be of good cheer. There she stood, the symbol of Spain's agony and Spain's unconquerable spirit. But she was much more than a national symbol. She personified to that vast multitude the sorrow in their own lives and the hope of ending that sorrow. She was the symbol of the common man and woman who had suffered and been exploited for ages and were now determined to be free.





## THE COMING OF WAR





## 1. Socialism, Fascism and Imperialism<sup>1</sup>

In order to improve the living conditions and remove the appalling poverty of the people, the whole structure of society should change. We may not be able to make the new structure strong until it is built on the foundation of socialism. Socialism does not mean harming anyone or destroying anything. Socialism is a means to improve the productive capacity and the economic conditions of a country. I believe that the world cannot progress and poverty cannot be removed without a socialist policy. At the same time, we cannot have socialism until power vests in the people. This gives rise to the question of Swaraj. Therefore our first task is to wrest freedom.

The world today is faced with two obnoxious movements. They are fascism and Nazism which are prevailing in Italy and Germany, and also in Japan. What has been perpetrated by fascism in Europe is being done by British imperialism in India. Fascism is a close relation of imperialism. Such of those capitalists as are opposed to socialism adopt a deceptive method. They first proclaim their sympathy with the poor but when they get power, they abandon the pro-poor slogans. Ten or twelve years ago Mussolini condemned democracy and declared himself in favour of a new method—the dictatorship. He concentrated on increasing his army to enable him to annex other countries by force. The attitude of the countries which posed as defenders of democracy, namely Britain and France, was peculiar. They outwardly favoured freedom but often helped fascism and Nazism, and even went to the length of betraying their friends, for instance, the Czech people.

The reason for this policy of Britain and France is a desire to avoid alliance with Russia. America and Russia are the two most powerful countries, and it is impossible to defeat them. It would be very difficult for any power or powers to defeat a combination of Britain, France, Russia and America, but Britain and France would not like to combine with Russia for they fear that a coalition with that country might lead to the spread of the new ideas of Russia in their countries. Therefore Britain and France chose to allow Germany to increase its power.

Mr. Chamberlain, Lord Halifax and their comrades have been saying that they will not allow aggression, but so far as action is concerned, there is no change in their policy and the basic reason for that attitude is that they do not want to join Russia. Russia is the strongest nation,

1. Speech at Allahabad, 13 April 1939. From *The Leader*, 15 April 1939.

and if there is war, the democratic countries will have to take the help of Russia. So far, Germany has been prevented from dominating Europe because of Russia. I think the present British cabinet is unique in recent British history, because whatever it did, it proceeded along wrong lines. There had never been in England a weaker cabinet than the one which functions today. The ruling class of England has shown that it is lacking in courage and is very poor in statesmanship.

I want you to keep before you the above picture of the world situation. There is also another danger facing India. An effort is being made in England to amend the Government of India Act.<sup>2</sup> The amendment would enable the Government of India, if there is a war emergency, to have authority to do all they wanted in the provinces to promote war effort. So far, the Governor and, in some cases, the Viceroy have the authority to interfere with the executive authority which vests in the ministers. Even this is resented by us; but now the British Government want to give powers to the Government of India in respect of the provinces also in the event of war. This has to be opposed at any cost. I am sorry to note that there has been very little agitation against this move. The council of the U.P. Provincial Congress Committee recently took up this question<sup>3</sup> and stated that such a step would not be accepted and allowed to be acted upon. I hope the A.I.C.C. and the Congress as well as non-Congress provincial governments will also do the same.

In the event of war, we will not help imperialism. Nor is it our desire that Germany or Italy should gain power. These two countries are dangerous powers and are opposed to freedom. If, unfortunately, their power increased that would cause a great setback to the struggle for freedom in India. I am pained to see sometimes in the Indian press praise being showered on Mussolini, Nazism, Japan, etc., by communal organizations like the Muslim League and the Hindu Mahasabha. I fail to understand why they praise them so as they have nothing to do with the communal question. It is obviously for the purpose of opposing the Congress that the leaders of the communal organizations have contracted friendship with German consuls and other pro-fascist elements in India. Reports have already appeared to the effect that the Muslim League has Nazi friends, and similar reports are also received about the Hindu

2. On 5 April 1939, a bill to amend the Government of India Act of 1935 was introduced in the House of Lords. One of its clauses empowered the federal executive to give directions to the provinces as to the exercise of their powers.
3. On 7 April 1939, the U.P.P.C.C. council decided not to accept any further limitation of powers of the provincial governments.



Mahasabha. The Muslim League and the Hindu Mahasabha ought to be opposed to each other, but that is not so, and both are opposed to the Congress. Whatever is done by the Congress, they derive immense pleasure in opposing it. Mr. Jinnah does not say anything against the Hindu Mahasabha, but he is very bitter against the Congress. Similarly, Mr. Savarkar is not saying much against the Muslim League but he is very bitter against the Congress. I am afraid these new developments would result in accentuating sectionalism in this country as against nationalism. Such actions of these communal organizations show that their objectives have no bearing on the question of the achievement of the freedom of the country. They are only helping fascism and Nazism. Unfortunately, our mutual quarrels tend to divert the country's attention from the real problems.

Therefore there is a need for strengthening the Congress *sangathan*, which cannot be undermined by any power except by our own internal weaknesses and quarrels. In this connection I would like to refer to a decision of the council of the U.P. Provincial Congress Committee forbidding Congress officials to involve themselves in matters relating to appointments, postings or transfers of government servants. We should also remember the council's resolution about the national volunteer corps.<sup>4</sup>

4. On 7 April 1939, the council, while appreciating the good work done by the volunteers department, laid special stress on the methods and objectives of training Congress volunteers.

## 2. The Coming of Dr. Schacht<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Schacht,<sup>2</sup> the great financier of Nazi Germany, has come to India to visit the beauty spots of our country, so he tells us. He has chosen

1. Allahabad, 16 April 1939. Editorial in *National Herald*, 19 April 1939.
2. Hjalmar Schacht (1887-1970); German financier and Nazi sympathiser; president of the Reichsbank; visited India in April 1939 to study the prospects of economic cooperation between Nazi Germany and India.

the hot summer months for this journey to our land and his itinerary, so far as we know it, is intriguing. Beauty for him apparently lies in gold and silver and the magic of commerce and barter. In search of this, he goes to Bombay and Calcutta and Delhi. Dr. Schacht, and indeed every foreigner in India, should be treated with courtesy, but it must be made very clear to him that the doctrine and the party he represents are very unwelcome in India. This would have been so at any time, but recent events have vastly increased the hostility of the Indian people towards Nazism and fascism. We want no dealings with these creeds of brutal violence, imperialist domination, race superiority and the crushing of democracy.

Few people can be taken in by Dr. Schacht's plea of being a simple tourist in India. In the same way, we suppose Herr Goebbels and General Goering<sup>3</sup> have been visiting Istanbul and North Africa to admire the mosque of St. Sophia or the solitary grandeur of the desert. Let us face reality. The world is a network of intrigue today, each nation trying to gain a political, strategic, military or economic advantage which may help it in the clash that is coming. Nazi Germany stands supreme in this game of intrigue and every one of her principal exponents is busy at it. Time flies, there is not a moment to lose. Let us get what we can before the decision is finally handed over to the bloody and uncertain arbitrament of war.

Dr. Schacht is here to advance the interests of Nazi Germany in every way he can and more particularly to make a deal in cotton and perhaps other raw materials which Germany needs. We understand that he has a scheme of barter whereby a large quantity of Indian cotton should be exchanged for German machinery. Ordinarily, we would welcome such barter between India and other countries, even though we might not approve of much that happened in those countries. But at the present moment any such arrangement is unthinkable. It would be most unwise for we are not likely to get any payment, even in kind, for the goods we supply. Dr. Schacht is known to have a remarkable way of taking without giving anything in exchange. Is he not the financial wizard of Germany?

But there are deeper and more fundamental reasons against a deal with Germany. Such a deal helps the Nazi power, economically and militarily. Our resources go to strengthen their military machine. We cannot tolerate this.

3. Hermann Wilhelm Goering (1893-1946); German Nazi leader; Commander-in-Chief of the German air force, 1935, and Field-Marshal, 1938; tried at Nuremberg and committed suicide on the eve of execution.



We have noticed with some misgiving that Indian merchants and businessmen in Bombay have been meeting Dr. Schacht. We do not know the nature of these talks but nevertheless we regret them. We regret also the association of prominent Indian industrialists in the welcome that was accorded to Dr. Schacht on arrival in Bombay. It is not fair to India or to Germany to slur over the deep feeling of indignation that exists in India against Nazi ideals and methods.

### 3. Destiny<sup>1</sup>

The Ides of March brought disaster to Europe and to democracy, and Czechoslovakia vanished from the map of the world. Yet war did not come. Stunned and full of fear, the countries of Europe waited for yet another spring of the beast of prey. It came soon enough, and Memel was the victim. Yet war did not come. We were told that the spring campaigns and offensives were over and peace would reign in Europe till the far-off autumn at least. But autumn was still far off when Easter came with its message of goodwill, and Good Friday saw the rape of Albania. Yet war did not come.

War has not come yet, but who can tell when it will descend on us? Who dare say that peace is assured till the autumn or even till the hot summer envelops us? There is marching and stamping of millions of armed men in Europe, and night and day men and women turn out engines of destruction and dig trenches and erect barricades, and the sky is covered with the messengers of death. Who dare say that the thin thread that holds back these forces will not snap and unleash destruction and doom on hapless mankind? Peace, so-called peace, holds today; what of tomorrow or the day after?

Like some pre-ordained tragedy, inevitable and inescapable, war pursues us and will seize us by the throat. We shall not escape our destiny.

1. Allahabad, 16 April 1939. Editorial in *National Herald*, 19 April 1939. Reprinted in *The Unity of India*, (London, 1941), pp. 152-154.

Meanwhile we discuss the problems of left and right<sup>2</sup> and speculate what the next Working Committee is likely to be. Meanwhile, Durbar Virawala is at his old tricks again,<sup>3</sup> and the rulers of the states or their ministers endeavour to crush their awakened people. And our provincial governments bow down before a hundred problems, and communal conflicts shame our people, and Shias and Sunnis glare at each other.<sup>4</sup> Yet a day will come when suddenly out of the blue a score of ordinances will descend upon us and put an end to our musing and to our trumpery arguments and conflicts. If those ordinances find us unready, then it will be ill for us and ill for our land.

We have had enough of this pettiness, and destiny calls to us, as of old, to shoulder the burden of a great nation's fate. Let us pull ourselves up and behave as men worthy of this destiny. Enough of party strife or communal trouble. Enough of everything that comes in the way of effective action to face the perils that surround us. The Congress must set its house in order and put an end to the deadlock that has so long disabled us. It must plan ahead and guide the nation in the hour of crisis. It must stretch out its hand in fellowship to all who care for India's freedom, for whatever label may attach to us, we are all pilgrims marching together to the same goal. Prestige or past conflict must not be allowed to come in the way of present or future cooperation. To our countrymen in communal organisations, the Muslim League and the Hindu Mahasabha, we would make appeal to set aside all bitterness and mutual ill will and to declare a truce to communal wrangling, forerunner of an enduring peace. And to Shias and Sunnis we would earnestly

2. In a statement on 1 March 1939, Rajendra Prasad, referring to the talk about right and left, said: "It has not been made clear what is meant by those expressions, why it is wrong to be in the Right and why it is meritorious to be in the Left. We want those who had talked about them—and the President has had his due share in that talk—should make it clear what they mean by placing before the country their clear-cut policy so that we may understand wherein we agree and wherein we differ."
3. The talks between Mahatma Gandhi and Durbar Virawala, the adviser to the ruler of Rajkot, held in April 1939 in connection with the personnel of the Rajkot Reforms Committee for proposing reforms having failed, Mahatma Gandhi declared: "Rajkot to me has been a priceless laboratory. My patience has been sorely tried by the tortuous politics of Kathiawar. I have told Mr. Virawala, I am defeated and you win!"
4. There was trouble in Lucknow in April 1939 between the Shias and Sunnis consequent on a U.P. Government *communique* of 30 March 1939 stating that the Sunnis could recite *Mad-he-Sahaba* at a public meeting or in the procession taken out on the *Bara Wafat* day (the death anniversary of the Prophet). The Shias who resented this held protest meetings.



suggest that the time has come when they should meet together and settle themselves the problem that has caused so much bitterness and suffering to both.

We have to be ready for the crisis. But the first shock of it will have to be borne by the provincial governments, and it is for them to keep wide awake and vigilant. The Congress policy, as recorded in numerous resolutions, stands clear. This has to be followed, and India is not going to be ordered about by British imperialism, or to carry out the mandates imposed from above upon her. The war emergency envisaged by the British Government stares us in the face and the Parliament in London is considering the new law to restrict and circumscribe still further the power of our provincial governments and provincial assemblies. The council of the United Provinces Congress has given the mandate in regard to this to our provincial government. It is for that government and for the assembly to act up to it and to get ready and prepare for the challenge. Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty.

#### 4. Relief for Ten Days<sup>1</sup>

In this strange world that we live in we have to be thankful for small mercies. If Herr Hitler rattles his sabre, threatens all and sundry, and declares Germany's God-given right to dominate Europe and the world, we seek consolation in the thought that after all he is not marching to-morrow on a neighbouring country. If Signor Mussolini merely curses and denounces all countries that oppose him and their timid ministers and proclaims that Italy can no longer be a prisoner in the Mediterranean and must expand her empire, we are relieved to find that after all he is not immediately going to march on Tunis or Djibuti or take possession of the Suez Canal. Our standards of examining and judging the spoken word of diplomats and men in authority have changed greatly since fascism and Nazism introduced their language.

War has been very near during these days and the fear of it has induced even Mr. Chamberlain and Lord Halifax to begin a flirtation with Soviet Russia. But for ten days at least there is going to be peace, and

1. Allahabad, 18 April 1939. Editorial in *National Herald*, 21 April 1939. Reprinted in *The Unity of India*, (London, 1941), pp. 301-304.

for that the credit must go to President Roosevelt.<sup>2</sup> After listening to the quibbling of the Chamberlains and Daladiers, it is a relief to hear the clear and firm voice of Mr. Roosevelt. That voice has power behind it, the power of a mighty nation, and it must be heard even by Herr Hitler and Signor Mussolini. Because of that stern warning from across the Atlantic, Herr Hitler has summoned the Reichstag for April 28 to listen to his reply.<sup>3</sup> So there will be peace till the 28th at least, and perhaps longer.

Three years ago the British Government addressed a questionnaire to the Nazi government, more or less on the lines of Mr. Roosevelt's present approach.<sup>4</sup> That questionnaire was ignored and thrown into a waste-paper basket. No reply was given. There is going to be a reply this time for America counts more than England, and silence itself is the most significant of replies. We can well guess what the German and Italian replies will be from the tone of their press. These replies will refuse to give the guarantees asked for and will reject the idea of a joint conference with Soviet Russia as one of the parties to it. They will declare an entire absence of intention to act as aggressors, but will proclaim their right to expand and to resist 'encirclement'.

It is possible, though still unlikely, that President Roosevelt's dramatic and forceful intervention might avert war. It may delay it. Such an attitude taken in common with England, France and Soviet Russia eight months ago would have scotched all present chance of war and saved Czechoslovakia and Spain. But Mr. Chamberlain was bent on his policy of 'appeasement', and the consequences of that policy face us today.

It is clear now that throughout the past two years or more, Mr. Chamberlain and Lord Halifax have consistently followed a policy which

2. In a personal appeal for peace on 14 April 1939, President Roosevelt asked Hitler and Mussolini to give an assurance that their armed forces will not attack thirty independent nations named by him. The President stated that complex world problems which affected all humanity should be discussed in an atmosphere of peace which cannot exist "if negotiations are overshadowed by the threat of force or by the fear of war."
3. In his Reichstag speech on 28 April 1939, Hitler called on Roosevelt to redeem President Wilson's promise to consider German colonial claims.
4. In a note sent to Britain on 1 March 1936, Germany explained the reasons for her denouncing the Locarno Pact, and outlined the proposals for restoring peace in Europe. In reply, the British Government sent on 8 May 1936 a questionnaire to the German Government seeking certain clarifications and particularly asked whether Germany could signify that she recognised and intended "to respect the existing territorial and political status of Europe, except in so far as they might be subsequently modified by free negotiations and agreement."



aimed at a political and economic alliance with Nazi Germany. In their attempt to gain this they sacrificed their friends and allies and endangered the safety of their own country and empire. For the fall of Spain is a greater danger to England and France than almost any other possible disaster could have been. For this Mr. Chamberlain laboured with an astonishing blindness and obstinacy. He succeeded and now that very success has shown the utter failure of his policy.

Why did Mr. Chamberlain persist in this dangerous course which could only lead to catastrophe? In the world today three powers dominate the scene; all others are secondary and have lost initiative. These three powers are Nazi Germany on the one side, and the United States of America and Soviet Russia on the other. Mr. Chamberlain knew that England could not function alone in any major policy. She had to choose sides, and he made her choose the side of Nazi Germany for any cooperation with Russia was hateful to him, and, in spite of all the soft words and pious phrases, he disliked American democracy. The only alternative was collective security, with Russia as a partner in the undertaking.

Every act of fresh aggression of the Nazis or the Italian fascists pained him no doubt but he accepted it, stuck to his Munich policy, and made it easier for the next aggression to take place. If British public opinion grew too agitated and alarmed, he delivered a brave speech which soothed people and strengthened his hold on them. But the same policy continued.

It now seems possible that, in spite of himself, he might be forced into a war with Germany, and this possibility has induced him to make friendly overtures to Russia. For without Soviet assistance England and France would put up a poor show. Yet even now the Munich policy shows its face and governs Mr. Chamberlain's mind and hand. Is it right or reasonable to expect him to discard his prejudices and to change his spots overnight?

If conflict with Germany comes, then it will be in spite of Mr. Chamberlain, and yet it will be Mr. Chamberlain who will be in control in England. Chamberlainism will still flourish and may still betray the forces of democracy. Can any democrat view this prospect without dismay? The British Labour Party has already, in accordance with its traditional policy, surrendered to Mr. Chamberlain and the forces opposed to him are weak. Some may cry "Chamberlain Must Go", but let us recognise that his hold on the British public is still strong. And that is the misfortune of the British public and of democracy.

It is true that a war against Nazism and fascism, and especially one in which Soviet Russia is engaged, will release powerful forces which

Mr. Chamberlain cannot suppress. It is also true that everyone who cares for freedom and democracy will desire the triumph of the progressive side. But to line up under Chamberlainism is a hard and difficult task for those who have seen and felt the heart-breaking results of this treacherous policy.

For us in India our path is clear. It is one of complete opposition to the fascists; it is also one of opposition to imperialism. We are not going to line up under Chamberlainism; we are not going to throw our resources in defence of empire. But we would gladly offer those very resources for the defence of democracy, the democracy of a free India lined up with other free countries.

## 5. The Challenge<sup>1</sup>

Problems and difficulties surround us. The Congress organisation is not functioning as it should, and different forces pull it in varying directions. The Congress President has not fully recovered yet from his long illness. Argument continues as to what took place at Tripuri.<sup>2</sup> Our friends the Liberals are agitated over the employment tax;<sup>3</sup> the Muslim League continues to tell us of the real or imagined failings of the Congress. In

1. Allahabad, 18 April 1939. Editorial in *National Herald*, 21 April 1939. Reprinted in *The Unity of India*, (London, 1941), pp. 155-156.
2. Subhas Chandra Bose was elected President of the Congress on 29 January 1939 by defeating Pattabhi Sitaramayya by a majority of 203 votes. Pattabhi's defeat, Mahatma Gandhi said, "is more mine than his". The election of Bose was followed by sensational developments culminating in the resignation of twelve out of fifteen members of the Working Committee on 9 February. At Tripuri the trouble started when M.S. Aney put forward the resolution proposing that in view of the Congress President's bad health the consideration of the clarification of the misunderstanding that had arisen out of the presidential election should be referred to the A.I.C.C. at some future date. Though the resolution was passed by a clear majority, G. B. Pant moved his resolution on 12 March, according to which the President was to nominate the Working Committee in accordance with Mahatma Gandhi's wishes. This was interpreted by Bose's supporters as an indirect vote of censure. Then followed the shouting and counter-shouting till Aney withdrew his resolution. Subsequently, Bose resigned and Rajendra Prasad was elected President of the Congress on 30 April 1939.
3. The U.P. Government had proposed to levy a graduated tax on an annual salary of Rs. 2,500 and above.



Lucknow the Shia-Sunni tangle has unfortunately not been resolved yet to the satisfaction of all concerned. In the states there is a deep rumbling, precursor of mighty movements, which are checked for a while under Mahatma Gandhi's advice.<sup>4</sup> In the West armies march and politicians intrigue, and the world waits breathlessly for the issue of war or peace.

If war comes all our petty conflicts and troubles will vanish under the strain of overwhelming crisis. India will be tested then to the uttermost, and it is time we got ready for that test.

Meanwhile a challenge has been thrown out to us, a challenge which none of us can ignore. That challenge is the attempt to amend the Government of India Act for war emergencies, in order to emasculate still further our provincial governments. The whole past history of the Congress, the very resolution under which Congressmen accepted office, stand out as a reply to this challenge. It was not necessary for a fresh direction to be given. Yet it was well that the council of the U.P. Provincial Congress Committee declared explicitly that this amendment, or any intrusion of the central government on the present power of the provincial governments, will not be tolerated. It was well that they drew attention to this challenge and, in dignified language, made it clear that any such intrusion would be considered a *casus belli*.

This is a major issue for us and for India and this fact must be realised by all concerned, for the consequences that will follow any attempt to coerce a provincial government will inevitably be serious.

We understand that the bill to amend the Government of India Act is likely to be rushed through the British Parliament by the end of this month.<sup>5</sup> Let those who do so realise where they are going to. There are rocks ahead.

4. On 23 March 1939, Mahatma Gandhi declared that after due consideration he had concluded that in the larger interests of the nation, it was not advisable to start civil disobedience in the Indian states for the time being.
5. The bill after passage in the House of Lords was rushed through the House of Commons in eleven minutes. Subsequently, further amendments were made with the object of increasing the Viceroy's powers.

## 6. The Congress and War<sup>1</sup>

Rashtrapati Bose has very fittingly reminded the country of the Congress attitude to imperialist war.<sup>2</sup> In these days when war hovers over the horizon and may descend upon us at any moment, we must be clear in our own minds about the course that we must follow. That course has been laid down for us by the Congress year after year in clear and unequivocal language. Over eleven years ago the Madras Congress passed the war danger resolution and declared to the world that we would be no parties to imperialist war.<sup>3</sup> Ever since then our policy has been further elaborated in Congress resolutions and explained from thousands of platforms.

That policy consists essentially of the right of the Indian people to decide on peace or war and their determination to resist any imposed decision on them. Further, that they will in no event allow their manpower and resources to be exploited for imperialist purposes. This policy is clear enough and by this we must stand. And yet this policy is largely a negative one and the mere enunciation of principles is not always enough when new and complicated developments require adjustments from day to day. A subject country can only have a negative policy in such matters, the positive side being the struggle for its own freedom. But India, though still subject to British imperialism, has passed the stage of mere protest and agitation. With full consciousness of her approaching freedom, she is building up a constructive policy and in international councils she speaks with weight and dignity. Therefore, when she addresses the world she speaks positively and expresses her desire to line up with the forces of freedom and democracy.

Is there a conflict between these two attitudes? Does India speak with two voices? We do not think there is the slightest contradiction, for the seeming contradiction lies in India's present position and not in the policy we shall pursue.

As a nation, interested in world freedom, India sees with horror the growth of the Nazi and fascist powers which embody the latest and most brutal phases of imperialism. She realises that a world triumph of fascism

1. Allahabad, 22 April 1939. Editorial in *National Herald*, 28 April 1939.

2. In a statement on 19 April 1939, Bose reaffirmed the Congress policy of non-participation in an imperialist war and expressed determination to resist non-violently any attempt to involve India in such a war or to exploit India's manpower or natural resources for war purposes.

3. See *Selected Works*, Vol. 3, p. 25.



will mean the suppression of freedom everywhere and the throttling of her own struggle for freedom. She believes that their aggression can be checked by democratic forces lining together and establishing real collective security. If war comes between such forces and fascism, she would inevitably favour the former and hope for the defeat of fascism. If she was a free nation she would throw her resources in favour of real democracy.

But, and there are many buts, she is not a free nation, and as a subject country she can only be exploited to others' advantage and for the further strengthening of the imperialism that holds her. She cannot submit to that. Nor do we see anywhere that pooling of democratic forces which is necessary for real collective security. Collective security can only be based on freedom and on the elimination of imperialism. The collective security we are interested in is one in which we can join as a free democratic country. There is much talk of the defence of democracy in western Europe today, but that democracy covers the ugly body of imperialism which, frightened by another of its kind, more vital and more brutal, seeks to save itself. This so-called democracy will fight, if it fights, so that the Union Jack might continue to fly over Britain's wide-flung colonies and over India. We have seen Mr. Chamberlain's democracy stab in the back and do to death the real democracies of Czechoslovakia and Spain. Who knows what further betrayals it has in store for us?

No, we shall have nothing to do with Mr. Chamberlain's brand of democracy or with any war that may be fought in its name. We dislike Herr Hitler and his methods greatly but we have no liking for Mr. Chamberlain and his methods, and we have no intention of marching under his banner. Herr Hitler and Mr. Chamberlain both agree that India must remain a subject country, for has not Herr Hitler said that it would be a terrible blow to him if the Indians seceded from the British Empire?<sup>4</sup> We disagree with both and we propose to function so that we might disappoint both.

Thus it is inevitable and inescapable for us to resist our being dragged into a war at the bidding of others. We can no longer be the pawns of others. When India is free we shall consider our position afresh.

4. See *Selected Works*, Vol. 7, p. 54.

## 7. The Gathering Clouds<sup>1</sup>

Within a few days the leaders of the Congress will gather in Calcutta and try to unravel the knot that has tied up many Congress activities during the past three months. The immediate prospect is not as hopeful as we would like it to be, and yet we refuse to be pessimistic. We have endeavoured during these past weeks since Tripuri to keep the *Herald* outside the controversy that has been raging in the newspaper press in some parts of India on the issues that confront the Congress organisation. We are not averse to controversy, and democratic practice demands a full consideration of all aspects of a problem before a decision is arrived at. We would have willingly expressed our own opinions if the controversy had been about matters of principle or vital policy. But, unfortunately, debate and argument have centred round personal matters, and we are strongly of opinion that this approach is undesirable and clouds the issues. Even if this was permissible to some extent during normal periods, this surely is no time for us to get entangled in petty matters and to make our national policy the slave of our likes and dislikes.

We are strongly of opinion that it is imperative for us to hold together during times of crisis, as we have done so often before when danger threatened. The Tripuri Congress may have produced varying reactions among different people. But let us remember that it is the Congress and its decisions that govern our policy and are binding on us. That must be the foundation of our work and our unity. To challenge those decisions is to challenge the Congress itself and thus to attack the very basis of our national movement.

But while we argue about our domestic differences, vital as they might be, clouds gather on the horizon, and through the gaps in them dangerous vistas open out. War, war of many nations and many peoples, still hangs in the balance and we await the development of events with the most anxious interest. But waiting is not enough if our national policy in regard to war, so often proclaimed and repeated, has any meaning.

We have drawn attention to the challenge of the Government of India Act Amendment Bill, recently introduced in the British House of Lords. Probably this will have a swift passage through both Houses in England and will become law. What does this mean? It is not only a challenge

1. Allahabad, 25 April 1939. Editorial in *National Herald*. Reprinted in *The Unity of India*, (London, 1941), pp. 157-159.



to the very conception of provincial autonomy, it is also the first and a far-reaching step towards committing India to war. It is an attempt to mobilise Indian resources for war purposes without India's consent. It is a complete challenge to the war resistance resolutions of the Congress.

Let us admit that in the event of war there must be a central authority in India in control of the war situation. But that central authority can only be ourselves, or else it displaces what little authority we have and makes of provincial autonomy a mockery and a sham. A foreign central authority in full control of all that pertains to war means the establishment in India of a foreign war dictatorship. If we were unwise enough to submit to this, it would mean the paralysis and end of such restricted freedom as we possess.

This is the situation we have to face. By the passing of the India Act Amending Bill the whole basis and the surrounding circumstances under which the Congress decided, after much doubt and argument, to accept office are altered, and a new relationship is created. Are we prepared to accept this? The whole past history of the Congress supplies the answer to this.

Many of us have laid stress on the struggle against federation. If federation is ever imposed upon us there is bound to be a major struggle. But for our part we do not think that there is any likelihood of any such imposition. In any event, federation is a remote issue; the issue to-day is the India Act Amending Bill and its consequences.

At this critical moment when all our united strength is required to meet the new peril, it grieves us to find national energy being frittered away in mutual conflict. It saddens us especially to read the poignant statement which has just been issued by Mahatma Gandhi about Rajkot.<sup>2</sup> That is not the way Gandhiji has functioned when danger threatens India; that is not the way, we feel sure, he will function. India needs him, India relies upon him, India calls to him. He must answer the call.

2. Mahatma Gandhi stated on 24 April 1939: "Rajkot seems to have robbed me of my youth. I never knew that I was old. Now I am weighed down by the knowledge of decrepitude. I never knew what it was to lose hope. But it seems to have been cremated in Rajkot. My 'Ahimsa' has been put to a test such as it has never been subjected to before."

## 8. To Harry Pollitt<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
April 26, 1939

Dear Comrade Pollitt,

I have just received your letter<sup>2</sup> of the 12th April as well as the pamphlets you have sent. Thank you for them.

Those of us here who tried to follow international events carefully, have come to more or less the same conclusion regarding Chamberlain's policy which you have. Very few people are taken in by it but inevitably most people in India are so absorbed in our internal problems that they pay little attention to foreign happenings. Of course, the prospect of war cannot be ignored even by them and there is a growing discussion about India's attitude. The full implications of the situation are not easily understood but the general attitude is one of resisting any imposition on India.

Unfortunately, at this critical time, we have to face an internal crisis in the Congress, as well as a very difficult communal situation leading to frequent riots. I am greatly distressed at these developments and especially the way principles and policies are covered up by criticisms of personalities. I do not yet know how things will shape themselves. I am going today to the meeting of the All India Congress Committee in Calcutta.

The developments in Spain came to us as a great shock and they make one feel terribly sad. I suppose we shall have to suffer many such shocks in the present-day world before we come out of this darkness.

With all good wishes,

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. Pollitt wrote that compromise with the fascist powers remained the basic policy of Chamberlain.



9. To V.K. Krishna Menon<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
April 26, 1939

My dear Krishna,

Your letter of the 15th April.<sup>2</sup> I have fully realised the consequences of the Government of India Act Amending Bill, and, in so far as I can, I have put this before the public. You will remember that I wrote to you about it some months back. The draft of the bill was sent to the provincial governments for their opinion. I understand that the Congress governments strongly opposed that part of the bill dealing with war emergency. I do not know exactly what they wrote. I do not suppose they held out any threat but their opposition was clearly expressed. At a later stage, I understand that the U.P. Government wrote again to express their strong disapproval. The Working Committee last year was also of the same opinion. Since then there has been no Committee.

All this does not clearly indicate what steps we are going to take later on. The council of the U.P.P.C.C. was clearer on this subject, and as President I asked the U.P. Prime Minister to give effect to our policy. I sent a copy of my letter to Subhas. He expressed his agreement with it and circulated it among other Prime Ministers.

I have been writing in the *National Herald* on the subject also, though I have preferred doing so lately in the form of unsigned editorials. I have been sending you some of these.

I am going to Calcutta today for the All India Congress Committee meeting. For the moment I see no light and Gandhiji's latest statement about Rajkot is very depressing.

In Lucknow Rama Rao<sup>3</sup> showed me your letter to him of the 8th April. Generally speaking I agree with what you have written to him. About the Tass agency, I see no reason why you should not have fraternal arrangement with them.

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. He feared that the Government of India Act Amending Bill might prove "the first step in the mobilization of Indian resources for war purposes without India's consent". This would bring the Congress "into conflict with the government" and asked whether the Congress governments would take any action against "derogation of their own powers".

3. K. Rama Rao (1896-1961); editor, *Swarajya*, 1934-35, *National Herald*, 1938-46, *Searchlight*, 1948-50, and *Congress Sandesh*, 1951-52; member, Rajya Sabha, 1952-54.

About cables, it is necessary in these days to have news sent swiftly and so you had better cable when you think it necessary. But we are terribly hard up and all unnecessary expenditure should be avoided. Perhaps you might spend between Rs. 100/- and Rs. 150/- a month on them.

Do not trouble to send news about petty meetings and events which have no importance.

Yours affectionately,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

## 10. The Congress and War Danger<sup>1</sup>

The President, Mr. Subhas Chandra Bose, should have moved this resolution in the House, but as he is absent, I have to move it.<sup>2</sup> It is a matter of great danger to the country, and the A.I.C.C. has moved such a resolution many a time. It has proclaimed twice or thrice its determined policy on war, and attempts have been made to renew the policy. There is nothing new in this resolution. We have said that we shall fight against the imposition of any law that seeks to exploit the resources of India. I am not saying anything that is not in consonance with the Congress policy. Every Congress government must act according to the resolution. There has been organised effort against the possible imposition of federation. I have sometimes ventured to say that this question of federation is not a live question. But I don't believe that it is a dead question. Yet, there are other vital questions before us today to be solved in addition to the question of federation.

The principal question is the power that will be given to the central government by this amending bill in case of a war emergency. This question, therefore, demands our greatest attention. Again, think of the

1. Speech at the A.I.C.C. session in Calcutta on 1 May 1939 while moving the resolution on war danger. From *The Hindu*, 1 May 1939.
2. The resolution stated that the Congress was determined to oppose all attempts to impose a war or exploit the resources of India without the consent of the Indian people. It also recorded its "complete disapproval of the attempt being made by the British Government to amend the Government of India Act with a view to concentrating all power, in the event of a war emergency, in the hands of the central government which functions completely as an agent of British imperialism."



war emergency legislation taking place in England. There has been a fair amount of criticism in India of this amendment, but its significance has not been fully realised by our people or even by the Congressmen in the country. This amendment, introduced in the House of Lords, places us at a disadvantage. If we peacefully submit to it, it means nullifying the policy of the Congress which it has adopted since 1928 regarding the participation in war. The amendment, if passed, will put an end to provincial autonomy, which was introduced two years ago.

If there is war there might be a constitutional crisis, which might end all constitutions. It means going afresh into the whole question of continuance in office and therefore this question is a very important and very vital one. This resolution is not a mere repetition of the war resolutions which had come before the House earlier. Some people are of opinion that the Congress governments must resign. I want them to fight without resigning. We must consider the situation as it arises from day to day. I think they must fight without resigning.

The amending bill has now passed only second reading in the House of Lords. It may come before the House of Commons in a few months. You may have to face war danger and war emergency. This is no more an academic question. We have to think in terms of an emergency which may come about. I would like you to think of the present position in India in its true perspective and resist the bill with all your might. In this connection, I would like to repeat the hackneyed saying: "If we do not hang together we hang separately."

## 11. No Contradiction in Congress Policy<sup>1</sup>

A certain seeming contradiction arises in regard to our policy towards war. On the one hand, we are anti-fascist and we think that a fascist victory will not only be disastrous for the world as a whole, but also bad for our own freedom. Therefore, inevitably, we do not want a fascist victory. On the other hand, to support British imperialism is obviously a wrong policy, for the country is dominated by that imperialism. The contradiction does not really lie in our policy, but in the circumstances themselves.

1. Interview to the press, Calcutta, 2 May 1939. From *National Herald*, 5 May 1939.

If we think of the question in terms of a free India, obviously we are led to the conclusion that we should support the forces of democracy as opposed to the forces of fascism. If we think in terms of a subject India, we are led to the conclusion that we cannot support imperialism that dominates her. The conflict is resolved when the subjection is removed and a free India can choose its own policy in regard to war as well as other matters.

Then, again, even apart from this, to say that the present British Government is a champion of democracy is not true. If it was in favour of real democracy, its first function should be to introduce democracy in its empire. The mere fact of its not doing so—in fact the British Government is resisting it—is sufficient evidence that it is not the democracy that it seems to be. Further, the present British Government is dominated by Mr. Chamberlain and has a record which is as black as possible in regard to world freedom and democracy, which it has succeeded in killing both in central Europe and Spain. The responsibility for this is fundamentally Mr. Chamberlain's.

It is quite clear that Mr. Chamberlain has been pursuing a policy, for some time past, of bringing about economic and political arrangements with Nazi Germany. He has failed in that because of various forces, but he has gone a long way in removing obstructions from Germany's path and adding to the strength of the Nazis. I do not think he has fundamentally changed his policy even now, despite his brave speeches. A brave speech is delivered when there is popular pressure, but the general policy remains the same. It may be that owing to the rapid development in the situation he might drive himself into a war against Germany, but at no time can one trust Mr. Chamberlain to fight for democracy. And it is inconceivable for us to march under his banner. Even a free India, though it would gladly throw in its resources on the side of democracy and freedom in a world struggle, would not, I think, ally itself with Mr. Chamberlain's policy or submit to his leadership. For a subject India dominated by British imperialism to do so is unthinkable.

To the question whether India would not stand to lose heavily in the event of Britain involving herself in a life and death struggle with totalitarianism, unaided by friends of democracy, I would say that India as well as the rest of the world certainly stand to suffer greatly if fascism dominates the world. But India will not suffer greatly if British imperialism fades away. The suggestion that England would prefer defeat rather than a fair deal to the empire and liquidation of her imperialism is itself significant. All major questions in the world today, whether those in Europe or in the Far East, political or economic, fascist or imperialist, are tied up together, and it is difficult to consider one without



the other. The question of Indian freedom is not only intimately related to these and other questions, but in a sense is a crucial one, having a tremendous bearing on the solution of other questions.

The establishment of Indian independence would lead inevitably to the termination of British imperialism, and England will then become a really democratic country. The end of British imperialism will lead to the ending of every imperialism and the establishment of a united democratic front against fascism. That is the real answer to Herr Hitler's demand for colonies. The struggle with fascism then becomes a straight one. Therefore, for British statesmen, to try to keep the question of Indian independence apart from other issues, is to seek to evade the real crux of the question, and by seeking a temporary advantage, they are injuring the cause of democracy and of England itself.

Today, even a real democrat in England hesitates to fight under Mr. Chamberlain's leadership because of the repeated betrayals in the past which he has seen. For an Indian to think in terms of helping British imperialism in war is an even more absurd proposition, if the people in England are so keen to preserve their own empire at any cost.

## 12. To J. B. Kripalani<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
May 5, 1939

My dear Jivat,

You will remember that when I moved the war emergency resolution before the A.I.C.C., an amendment<sup>2</sup> was brought forward suggesting two things:

- (1) that the provincial assemblies be called upon to pass a resolution on similar lines, and
- (2) that the Congress organisation should carry on propaganda on the basis of this resolution.

I assured the mover of the amendment that I agreed with his suggestion and I hoped that action would be taken on those lines. But it did not seem to me necessary to incorporate the amendment in the main resolution. At my request the amendment was withdrawn.

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. Moved by R.D. Bhargava, member of the A.I.C.C. from U.P.

I feel that something should be done by the A.I.C.C. office to popularise this resolution and to ask the Congress organisations to educate public opinion on it. Further that the provincial assemblies, where the Congress is in majority, should pass similar resolutions. These resolutions should preferably be official resolutions brought by the government. I hope you will address the Prime Ministers accordingly.

Yours affectionately,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

### 13. To Eduard Benes<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
May 31, 1939

Dear Dr. Benes,

Mr. Ladislav Urban, your consul in Bombay, has suggested to me that I should write to you and explain India's attitude towards a possible war in Europe. I gladly do so. Our general policy has inevitably been an anti-imperialist one and has centred round the independence of India. We have, however, seen the Indian problem in its relation to the world problems. With the growth of fascism and Nazism our reactions were wholly anti-fascist and anti-Nazi. We looked upon them as of the same species as imperialism and aggravations of it. We felt that any true solution of the problems of peace and democracy must be based on an elimination of both fascism and imperialism.

There was occasionally apparent conflict between some imperialist powers, like England and the Nazi power, but in reality British imperialism consistently supported Nazi aggression. This became patent last year in Czechoslovakia.

During the Czechoslovakian crisis last year, our sympathies were entirely with the Czechs and it was very painful for us to see how dismemberment was forced on the country by British and French policy.

We are entirely of opinion that aggression must be stopped by the building up of a peace front. If such a real peace front was organised, India would give whole-hearted support to it. But it is a little absurd to ask us to fight for democracy and to deny this very democracy to us. As a subject nation we can only be exploited in the interests of British

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.



imperialism. We have therefore declared that we cannot tolerate any decisions being imposed upon us and if the British Government wants to force us into war we shall resist this. Further we have no intention of joining an imperialist war. You will appreciate that it is difficult for us to accept the *bona fides* of Mr. Chamberlain and his government in the matter of freedom and democracy. We have seen too many betrayals.

Recently one of our important provincial committees passed a resolution on the war emergency. As this resolution lays down our policy I am enclosing a copy of it.

May I add that I retain the most lively and pleasant memories of your beautiful country and I share in your sorrow at the tragedy that has befallen her? I have confidence, however, that she will pass through the valley of the shadow and become again a free, progressive and democratic country.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

#### 14. To Rajendra Prasad<sup>1</sup>

Lucknow  
July 7, 1939

My dear Rajendra Babu,

I have your letter of the 4th.<sup>2</sup> I think that the immediate danger of war has probably passed but there is no knowing and the next two and a half months are critical. I think that as soon as war seems to be imminent, or on the point of being declared, the Working Committee should certainly be called. I agree with you that it would be desirable to invite Subhas Babu, Narendra Deva and Jaya Prakash to this meeting. You might perhaps add one or two others such as some prominent Muslims in the Congress, after consultation with Maulana Azad. Even before the Working Committee meeting the imminence of the crisis would require a public statement from you in which you would state the Congress position of non-participation afresh and call upon the Congress ministries and Congressmen generally to give effect to it. I think in this

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. He had suggested that the Working Committee meet for a discussion of the possibility of immediate war.

statement you might also say something to the effect that you would welcome the cooperation of the Muslim League in this joint endeavour. I would suggest your writing to Jinnah and telling him that in view of the grave crisis which threatens the country you would welcome his and the Muslim League's cooperation in the evolution of a common programme of non-participation in the war. I do not think any reference need be made in that letter to the Hindu-Muslim problem as such.

I think it would be worthwhile for you to write to the Congress ministries now impressing upon them the vital need of their keeping wide awake in this matter and not permitting any entanglement on their part in war preparations and the like. They should make it clear again to the Governors what their and Congress position is.

Perhaps it would be also desirable if you were to issue a general statement on the subject to the press now.

I am returning to Allahabad tomorrow night and shall remain there till the 12th morning. On the 13th and 14th I shall be in Bombay. On the 15th I leave for Ceylon by air.<sup>3</sup>

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

3. Jawaharlal visited Sri Lanka from 15 July to 25 July 1939. He was sent there by the A.I.C.C. to help solve the problem of the Indian settlers.



## PROVINCIAL AUTONOMY





## THE WORKING OF THE MINISTRIES

1. To Gulzari Lal Nanda<sup>1</sup>

Wardha  
November 22, 1938

My dear Gulzari Lal,<sup>2</sup>

Thank you for your letter of the 20th November which has just reached me.<sup>3</sup> It is true that I have been greatly distressed at the developments in connection with the Bombay Trades Disputes Bill.<sup>4</sup> I went through the original draft with you and tried to understand some of its main provisions. It was a very complicated measure and you were good enough to explain it to me. It was not possible for me then or later to see it critically and to understand the possible consequences of some of its provisions.

After that the matter came up before the labour sub-committee of the Working Committee. Although I was not a member of that committee I was invited to be present. Unfortunately I could not give much time to it and I did not follow the proceedings in regard to this matter. My mind was full of my approaching visit to Europe and my interest therefore in what was going to happen in my absence was not very great.

I was given to understand by Masani that some changes for the better had been made in the new draft. I was gratified to learn this. But what these changes were I did not take the trouble to find out.

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. (b. 1898); a Congressman and trade union leader; minister in Government of India, 1952-66, and 1970-71; twice acted as Prime Minister.

3. He wrote that the Bombay Trades Disputes Bill was in the best interests of the working class and consistent with the principles of the Congress and mentioned the steps that were taken to meet the criticisms made against it.

4. The Bombay Trades Disputes Bill enjoined compulsory resort to conciliation or arbitration, a fine of Rs. 50/- for resorting to an illegal strike, three months' imprisonment for instigating workers to an illegal strike, and a maximum fine of Rs. 500/- for obstructing a labour officer in the discharge of his duty.

Then I went to Europe. I was asked many questions about the bill by labour people in London. They were very much disturbed by some provisions and pointed out that there seemed to be a going back on many of the things that the labour movement had fought for during the last 50 years or more. I was unable to say much to them because I was not fully posted as to the facts. Some criticisms that were made to me disturbed me greatly. This was not the part dealing with conciliation which was the backbone of the bill, but certain other parts in regard to the recognition of the trade unions. In effect, it seemed that under the bill it would be exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, to form independent trade unions. Employers' or company unions would usually be formed and, as you know, the labour movement has a horror of such unions. There were some other matters too which disturbed me. But I decided not to form any final opinion before I had seen the full text of the revised bill. Unfortunately I have not seen it yet.

I shall not, therefore, discuss the bill on the merits. But there is another aspect which deserves consideration. The fact is undoubted that large sections of labour opinion are intensely hostile to the measure, and the Congress government has become very unpopular with such sections. Whether this hostility is justified or not, the fact that it exists is in itself highly important. It is perfectly true that some of the hostile elements, like Ambedkar and Jamnadas Mehta and their group, have probably just exploited the situation in an attempt to injure the Congress and to advance their own prospects in the municipal elections and elsewhere.<sup>5</sup> But it is equally true that many others are honestly of opinion that the bill is injurious to trade unionism and labour, and this opinion has spread to a large section of the working class.

You point out in your letter the various steps you took to consult labour people and others at various stages. Still, it is undoubted that many people think that the bill was rushed through without sufficient opportunity being given for the consideration of such a controversial measure. It is a fact that some unions and others accepted the general principles in regard to conciliation but surely this did not imply the acceptance of many other clauses of the bill. It is not usual for a controversial measure like this not to be referred to a select committee or to be passed after suspension of the usual procedure.

5. On 15 September 1938, B.R. Ambedkar had characterised the Bombay Trades Disputes Bill as a civil liberties suppression act. Jamnadas Mehta said on 31 October 1938, "...a strike was due to fundamental causes of discontent against existing capitalist conditions and not to any perversity of a few labour leaders..."



Apart from past history, the present position is an exceedingly unfortunate one. It may happen that attempts to enforce the bill might lead to further trouble and friction and thus the very object of the bill to bring about peace in industry and to give an opportunity for workers' organisations to develop would be defeated. Passions have been roused and these are dangerous companions for the government. Naturally, those who are opposed to the Congress will exploit the situation to the utmost.

It is difficult for me, without further study and information, to suggest any way out of this impasse. I had hoped, as I was travelling back to India, that I would reach here before the bill was passed and would have a chance of meeting you and others concerned and discuss the situation with you. But I arrived too late. All I can say now is that the present situation seems to me full of dangerous possibilities, and I should very much like it not to be treated as a static one. I would make an attempt to distinguish between an out-and-out opponent of the Congress and genuine trade unionists who object to certain parts of the bill. And I would meet the latter and discuss the matter with them. Naturally, I am not in a position to make any suggestion to anybody as I am still not seized of all the facts. But one fact is obvious, and I cannot ignore it, and that is the unfortunate situation that has arisen, and I earnestly trust that the Bombay Government will do something to remedy it.

I shall be grateful if you will send me to Allahabad a text of the new Act as passed as well as the speeches you mention.

I am returning to Allahabad tomorrow. I shall come back to Wardha about the 7th of December for the Working Committee and I might be going to Bombay afterwards.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

## 2. To G.B. Pant<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
December 8, 1938

My dear Pantji,

I gave you a list of Jewish experts available for employment. I have received information that things are moving so fast that perhaps many

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

of these unfortunate persons may simply be crushed out of existence unless some way out is found for them. So far as the best experts are concerned they are likely to be employed by other countries. I would suggest to you, therefore, to come to a decision as quickly as possible. To save time you can communicate directly with the persons concerned or, better still, with V.K. Krishna Menon of the India League, 165 Strand, London W.C. 2, who can get in touch immediately with the various refugees' committees in London. The India League can also send you further particulars, or interview the persons concerned, and report to you. I am writing to them to do this work, if necessary.

In the event of your desiring to engage any person you might also let me know the name so that I might write.

As I have told you, I have got further particulars about these persons with me and I can supply them.

I am going to Wardha and shall be there for about six days. After that I shall be in Bombay for nearly a week.

I enclose another copy of the list.

Yours affectionately,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

### 3. The Kisans and the Congress<sup>1</sup>

Let me, at the outset, apologise to you for making a departure from the convention of the presidential addresses being written beforehand. I could not write my address, first, because I could not get time and, secondly, because I could not decide what I should write. I used to feel almost everyday that if anything came to my mind, I would sit down to write, if time permitted. That does not mean that I have no ideas. But I felt that if I talked about my recent visit to Europe, the kisans might get confused, for, they might say that they had come to the conference to hear things concerning their needs, and thus they might be upset if international politics were discussed. They might not also understand such matters. The kisans' problems are more important than the question of the country's Swaraj, for if kisans are not organised they

1. Presidential Address at the U.P. Political Conference, Ayodhya, 30 December 1938. From *The Leader*, 2 January 1939.



would continue to suffer as their suppression and exploitation would not end. But if we take into consideration the country's other major problems, then Swaraj and the international situation would be found to be interconnected; for, if there is a fire or an epidemic at a certain place, it is bound to affect many others in the neighbourhood. Therefore the kisans, who have assembled at the conference, and who are anxious about their own matters, should also try to understand the international situation because foreign politics and Indian affairs are interconnected. They should not feel that their leaders should not talk about international politics. Their leaders are anxious that the people in the country become wide awake so that every kisan is able to grasp the totality of the problems and is in a position to conduct his affairs without being dependent on others. We do not want that only a few leaders should understand everything, while kisans follow them blindly. The kisans took part in voting at the last elections, and they should understand for whom they had voted, and for whom they should vote in future.

Recently I visited Europe. The first country I visited was Spain, where efforts are being made by some foreigners to suppress the Spanish people. In China, too, world forces are at work to suppress the Chinese people. The imperialist forces are at work elsewhere also.

You should try to understand these developments so that you are prepared beforehand to face the situation in the event of a world war. Fiscal questions arising in other countries affect our country as well. You have to look at the conditions of kisans in other countries. The conditions of kisans in some countries are far better than the conditions of many Indian zamindars. In America, many kisans own motor cars. The main cause of the poverty of the kisans in India, and the country in general, is the imperialist power.

The new Government of India Act is an attempt at deceiving us because it does not give us any freedom. The Congress at first hesitated to accept office under that constitution for the fear that we may forget our main task which was the achievement of Swaraj. After further consideration, we accepted office, and many Congressmen are now in charge of the Congress ministries. What the Congress ministries have done is before you. Making any estimate of the work, good or bad, done by the ministry would take a long time. But there is no doubt that the acceptance of office has resulted in a lot of good. It would lead to the improvement in the conditions of the kisans. But the real advantage accruing to us from the acceptance of office has been that our power and *sangathan* for the work of Swaraj have increased. The kisans no longer feel so oppressed and downcast as they did till recently. Still,

the oppression of the *kisans* goes on. But during the last one and a half years, there has been much decrease in the extent of the oppression, either at the hands of the police or the zamindars or their *karindas* or anybody else. It is gradually lessening. I know that the *kisans* want that whatever is to be done for them should be done soon, and I have myself sometimes felt upset on seeing that the work is not being done quickly. But that is how the government machinery works. The *kisans* are weighed down with the conditions of acute poverty and distress and it is necessary for the ministry to work faster so that immediate relief is provided to the *kisans*. Therefore I am often upset at the slow progress of work. Of course, there are many difficulties to be faced. The major difficulty is that the present constitution, under which the Congress ministries have been formed, impinges on our freedom to act. We can do much better if we have *Swaraj*. The second difficulty arises from our own weaknesses. We have a habit of involving ourselves in petty matters and forgetting the major and real problems. For instance, we raise communal questions. The communal quarrels weaken the nation, but we should remember that in other big countries, when disputes occur, the whole country does not get involved in them. The work of *Swaraj* is not for any one community. It is for the entire country. Yet, some of our people always adopt a communal outlook, and it is very painful to find that some of our prominent countrymen, both Hindus and Muslims, do things which instead of uniting people cause dissensions among them. There are certain bodies which have taken upon themselves the task of maligning the Congress. If you read papers, you will notice that we in the Congress do not, as far as possible, even criticise them. What we point out is that whatever is said against the Congress is wrong. I have no hesitation in declaring here that the allegations made against the Congress from time to time are not only wrong but ridiculous and mean. I am ashamed when any educated Indian is a party to such irresponsible methods of public conduct. By such methods they do not only harm the country but harm their own community as well.

The door of the Congress is open to everybody; it is shut against those only who do not want freedom for the country. There are some communal parties whose membership is confined to Muslims, Hindus or Sikhs exclusively. Everybody has no doubt a right to strengthen his community. The Congress does not oppose the existence of the Muslim League or of the Hindu Mahasabha. But what the Congress dislikes is that generally the members of these parties only talk against the Congress and do not discuss the national problems although they also profess the creed of independence. They abuse the Congress, but I would ask them to realise that the person who indulges in abusing others only harms him-



self and not the person who is abused. Many baseless things are said against the Congress ministry, but the ministry deals with such allegations very leniently. Still, a cry is raised that under the Congress government the Muslims are being oppressed. The Congress requested the Muslims to tell them how they are crushed. The Muslim League, I understand, also appointed a committee.<sup>2</sup> The *Bande Mataram* song and the tricolour flag are the instances pointed out to show how the Muslims are being crushed. The colours in the flag were selected after deep deliberations. The tricolour flag represents the whole country, but if it is examined from a communal angle, then it has the green colour also, which is considered to be the colour representing the Muslims. Therefore, if anybody complains against the flag, I would call it an unfair complaint. There can be separate flags of communities, but they can have no place in the national work.

I regret that some elderly persons who have taken part in the national work, and for whom I have respect, talk like misguided people and thereby impede the progress of the national work and create mutual dissensions. The Congress would however remain firm in its policy and cannot be affected by false allegations. One fundamental principle adopted by the Congress has been that it would not involve itself in communal matters. The doors of the Congress are open to all and the Congress is also prepared to look into the problems faced by the people. But it would be a folly to expect that it would give up its old principles on which it has been working for the country. One of its fundamental principles has been protection of the minorities. I therefore hope that you would not involve yourselves in petty matters but push on our national work.

Acharya Narendra Deva has just pointed out that we have now reached the threshold of freedom, and if anybody puts obstacles in the way of our further progress, he should feel ashamed of such conduct.

I would therefore appeal to all to extend full support to the Congress ministry. If the ministry is found doing anything wrong then they should point out where it has acted wrongly. The Congress ministers and all other Congressmen belong to the same force and are fighting the common foe.

2. The committee under the Raja of Pirpur, appointed in 1938 by the Muslim League, reported that Muslims had been victims of a number of atrocities in three Congress provinces. It particularly referred to the *Bande Mataram* song, the Congress flag and the Vidya Mandir scheme of education.

We should not also do anything which would weaken the Congress *sangathan*. I understand that efforts are being made to form kisan sabhas as organizations rival to the Congress.<sup>3</sup> There is no harm in forming such organisations to strengthen the kisans, but if they are intended to weaken the Congress then that would be a wrong move.

The Congress is fighting for Swaraj. That is its primary object. But along with it there is also the problem of the removal of poverty. In my view both questions are interconnected, because poverty can be removed only when we have the reins of government in our hands and are able to have panchayat raj. Everyone should help in the realisation of these objectives.

I often see the red flag among the kisans. The red flag is an old flag of *mazdurs* and, in some countries, it is also a flag of the kisans. I am not opposed to it, but at the moment it is a great mistake to take out the red flag in villages. The kisans would get confused by seeing several flags. They are used to the tricolour flag, which has become a symbol of the struggle for Swaraj, of *sangathan* and of the kisan's strength; for behind that flag there is great strength. Therefore if another flag is taken to the kisans, that would do harm to the position of the tricolour flag. We should take the tricolour flag to every home, and I hope that no efforts would be made to carry the red flag among the kisans. I certainly have respect for the red flag, but, under the present conditions, we have to attain Swaraj under the tricolour flag, and the whole nation should come under it to advance the country's cause.

Recent happenings in some of the Indian states have raised high hopes. The Congress wants the Indian states also to join in the struggle for freedom, and it is a great pleasure to see signs of awakening in the Indian states. An agitation was started in Rajkot by the people of the state, and recently the raja had agreed to introduce the system of panchayati raj.<sup>4</sup> The British dewan was opposed to the people's demands but he had also to submit before the *sangathan* of the state's people. Rajkot is a small state, but the triumph of its people would serve as an example to other states. Some of them have accepted the principle of panchayati raj. In our own province, we have two states—Tehri (Garhwal) and Banaras—and I have heard that the Banaras state has also announced that the government would be run on the basis of panchayati raj. That is really half

3. These were formed by those Congressmen who had failed to obtain office.

4. After the satyagraha launched by the Praja Parishad had continued for three months, the ruler of Rajkot signed on 26 December 1938 a draft compromise with Vallabhbhai Patel agreeing to appoint a representative committee for introducing responsible government.



work done for we want such achievements in bigger states like Hyderabad and Kashmir also. The question of the Indian states is a complicated one. I hope that the Indian states would also cooperate in the struggle for Swaraj and thereby accelerate the pace of our march towards freedom.

The tenancy legislation is now before the assembly. What has really pained me is that though one and a half years have elapsed, the Congress ministry has not been able to get that legislation passed. Before the Congress ministry was formed, some orders such as those staying proceedings against the kisans were issued which gave them some relief, but it is painful to find that no legislation giving them substantial relief could be passed even though the Congress ministry has been functioning for the last eighteen months or so.

The zamindars have threatened satyagraha.<sup>5</sup> It is good that the zamindars are also learning the use of the weapon of satyagraha. But we are not opposed to the zamindars or taluqdars. The question is not of causing harm to anybody but of giving relief to poor tenants and of raising those who are fallen. There is no question of enmity towards anyone. What everyone has to realize is that our country cannot make progress until the conditions of the kisans improve. I hope that the Congress ministry would soon take steps to provide substantial relief to the tenants. The legislation which is before the assembly has many good provisions. The question however is of enforcing the legislation as early as possible. That should be done first of all. All other laws can be passed later. Among other problems, there is one of indebtedness, and I want that the provincial government should soon enact laws which would lessen the kisans' burden of indebtedness. I also want the kisans to consider the question of farming on a cooperative basis, for if fifty or sixty kisans combine to work together and distribute the produce among themselves, they would be better off than if each works separately on a small plot of land.

After the tenancy bill has been passed by the assembly—and it would be passed because the Congress party is in a majority—it would go to the council. The council members are not elected by the kisans, but they are elected by the zamindars and the capitalists. They do not like the bill and might put obstacles. I can only hope that obstacles would not be raised as that would agitate the kisans, and if there are obstacles, it should be the duty of the Congress and the kisans to show that they cannot tolerate them as they have already waited for a long time.

5. On 17 October 1938, the landlords of Avadh passed a resolution threatening civil disobedience if the tenancy bill were not revised.

I must also deprecate the tendency to resort to hunger strikes or satyagraha by the students. The Muslim League also declared sometime back that when the time came they would offer satyagraha against the Congress. I am amused that the League hurls abuses at the Congress, and at the same time thinks of imitating its methods.

I think the Congress in the United Provinces has perhaps the greatest *sangathan*. Our membership runs to about fifteen lakhs. There may be some among us who may not be genuine Congressmen, but I feel that the number of such members would not be large and those enrolled are really the members of this organisation. It has greatly pleased me to find such a large enrolment of members done here. We had some disputes at the time of the elections, but the Congress work in the province has improved since then. We have learnt how to conduct ourselves better. Our work would further improve as our strength increases.

I do not like the practice of the *kisans* showing respect to leaders by touching their feet. You are soldiers in the fight for Swaraj, and therefore you should keep your heads high instead of bending low before others.

Chandra Singh, a Garhwali prisoner, is still lying in jail and from this alone we can form an idea of the limitation of our powers. It shows that although we have a Congress ministry, we cannot do what the British Government does not want us to do.

I would again urge you to put an end to mutual quarrels and make concerted efforts to uplift the masses so that the whole country becomes strong and capable of winning Swaraj. I would also request you to celebrate the Independence Day on 26th January with great enthusiasm.

#### 4. Askote<sup>1</sup>

The first week of January of this year saw a remarkable pilgrimage. Five hundred peasants from Askote marched across the mountains and the valleys to lay their grievances before the Prime Minister of the United Provinces Government at Lucknow.<sup>2</sup> There were no roads or swift means

1. Article written at Almora, 25 January 1939. *National Herald*, 29 January 1939. Reprinted in *The Unity of India*, (London, 1941), pp. 144-146.

2. The main grievances of the peasantry were that they were tenants-at-will and could be ejected at any time. Every peasant was also required to do forced labour without any wages for at least three days in a year on the *rajwar's* (zamindar's) land.



of transport and for a full week they tramped, following the bridle path, to the distant plains below.

Where is this Askote? Who had heard of it before this band of five hundred determined men forced it on people's notice and put Askote on the map of India? Few, I imagine, outside the district of Almora knew of it. Askote is a taluqa in Almora district, a frontier region bordering on Nepal and not far from Tibet. It is a week's march from Almora town. One hundred and forty two villages dot its four hundred square miles, most of which are forest land.

This taluqa is held under a peculiar tenure by the *rajwar*, as the zamindar is called. Before the conquest of Kumaun by the Gurkhas, the *rajwar* seems to have considered himself a semi-independent chief and had freedom to do what he liked, subject to some kind of payment to the overlord. The Gurkhas reduced his status and made him a farmer of land revenue. Even then he had a great deal of freedom and could deal with his tenants as he liked so long as he paid the sum assessed by the government. The coming of the British made no essential difference to him, and though a number of settlements were made, his privileged position continued and he was unlike any other landlord in Kumaun. The British officers were anxious to keep on good terms with this frontier baron, who occupied a position of some strategic importance. Sir Henry Ramsay, the commissioner of Kumaun, wrote in 1873: "If political difficulties arise on the eastern frontier of Kumaun, the *rajwar's* services will be as much required and as valuable as ever, and to maintain his important position, it is most desirable that his former status be maintained."

So the *rajwar* continued, in practice if not in strict law, as a feudal chief far removed from any control from above. The government was obliging enough to make him a special magistrate and his brother the local police officer and *patwari*. (*Patwaris* in Kumaun have special powers.) The *rajwar* family was thus all-powerful and it was impossible for any of the tenants to object or protest against any imposition. There was not even a telegraph office in Askote, and the post to Almora took many days. The peasantry were backward and had to put up with a large number of payments, other than rent, on the ground of custom.

Echoes of the noncooperation movement reached Askote and gradually the peasants began to wake up and agitate against many of the illegal dues. They were crushed by the *rajwar* family repeatedly, and the agitation subsided for a while, but only to rise again. In 1938, the Congress government sent two committees to inquire and lengthy reports

were presented by these committees. The people waited patiently hoping that some relief would come to them at last. They had heard of some of the recommendations made in these reports and did not know that the wheels of governments move terribly slowly. Instead of relief coming there was some fresh aggression on behalf of the *rajwar* and then they lost patience.

They decided to march to Lucknow, and five hundred of them started on the long trail. A mild sensation was created; the whole district knew about it, and the peasantry followed the march with interest. Efforts were made to stop them by promises and assurances, but they continued till they reached the plains at Pilibhit. There, in response to a personal appeal from the Prime Minister, they stopped and sent a small deputation to interview him in Lucknow. They returned with the Prime Minister's word that he would set right their grievances. They are waiting for the fulfilment of that promise.

This Askote march has its lessons for us if we care to learn them. The Congress organisation in Almora was inactive and did little for the Askote people, government was slow-moving, and so these backward peasants, totally ignorant of politics and demonstrations, took the initiative into their own hands and decided to present their case personally to the big people at the top. By taking this step they succeeded more than they had done by years of patient petitioning. Their political education has begun and their progress is likely to be rapid.

## 5. To G.B. Pant<sup>1</sup>

Wardha  
February 21, 1939

My dear Pantji,

As you know, the British Government is trying to amend the Government of India Act with a view to take more powers in the event of a crisis. This is obviously a very objectionable and dangerous move. But I was surprised to learn from Sarup that the answer of your government to this was a somewhat vague and non-committal one to the effect that you are not interested in the amendment to the Act as you want the whole Act to go. This is a perfectly correct position in so far as petty

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.



amendments in favour of the people are concerned. But any amendment to restrict the power of the present provincial government is a vital challenge which cannot be passed lightly or academically. I had a talk on this subject with Gandhiji and other members of the Working Committee and they were all of this opinion. I hope therefore that your government will take up a strong attitude on this matter.

Yours affectionately,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

## 6. To V.K. Krishna Menon<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
February 24, 1939

My dear Krishna,

I should like to draw your attention to an attempt that is being made by the British Government to amend the Government of India Act. Various amendments have been suggested, most of them more or less minor ones. But the real amendment is to give power to the central government, in case of war, to assume executive responsibility in the provinces. It appears that at the time of the September crisis it was felt that the provincial governments might be in a position to obstruct any measure that the Government of India might adopt. So the Act was examined from this point of view and the new amendment suggested. Of course, it was always open to the British Government to suspend the constitution in the provinces in case of conflict. Under the new proposal they can simply take executive powers from the provinces in regard to matters affecting the war and yet leave the ministries to function. Obviously, this in itself would bring about a crisis.

While it has been our general attitude not to interest ourselves in any amendment of the Act, as we want the whole Act to go, it is obviously a very different matter when existing powers are taken away. I am writing to you merely to acquaint you with what is happening so that you may warn our friends there about possible developments.

Yours affectionately,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

**7. To B.G. Kher<sup>1</sup>**

Allahabad  
March 17, 1939

My dear Kher,

Some little time back I saw a report in the press about certain questions and answers in the Bombay Assembly relating to the Communist Party. It was stated on behalf of the Bombay Government that they had not recommended the removal of the ban on the Communist Party, nor do they want this done as this party stood for violence. I read this report with considerable surprise. To say that the Communist Party stands for violence is far from correct. But quite apart from this, it seems to me that the Bombay Government's answer is in direct contravention of the Congress policy in regard to such matters. So far as I remember, Congress members in the central assembly have asked for the removal of the ban. At the ministers' conference held last year in Bombay, it was agreed that this attempt should be made. In the Working Committee also this has been pressed, and numerous leading Congressmen have expressed themselves strongly on this subject. I should like to know, therefore, whether the answer of the Bombay Government reflects its own particular policy, which is different from the policy of the other Congress governments and Congress policy, or whether it has some further justification. The matter raises vital issues and before I speak or write about it in public I should like to have your views on the subject. For me the policy laid down by the Bombay Government is totally indefensible and is opposed to the general Congress policy of civil liberties.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.



## 8. To C. Rajagopalachari<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
March 17, 1939

My dear Rajagopalachari,

Many letters have come to me drawing my attention to a certain speech delivered by Mr. Varkey, Minister for Education in your government, at Tinnevely on March 6th.<sup>2</sup> I enclose a cutting from *The Hindu* giving a brief report of the speech.

I have read this report with astonishment. Mr. Varkey has every right to express his opinion against communism or socialism, but as a Congress minister he has no business to carry on propaganda against the declared policy of the Congress. The Congress has repeatedly expressed itself in regard to the conflict in Spain, and in doing so has condemned the rebels under General Franco, and sent its good wishes to the Spanish Republic. Mr. Varkey is reported to have said that General Franco stood for religion, order and democracy, and was against the communists who have done much harm in that country. Mr. Varkey has every right to hold the opinions he likes in regard to religion, though it does seem strange to me that General Franco should try to protect religion with the help of Moorish Muslims and German and Italian troops. It is stranger still that General Franco's conception of order should consist of the horrible bombings of civilian population, undefended cities and helpless refugees. As for democracy, I have not yet come across any person accusing General Franco of being democratic. Perhaps Mr. Varkey's ideas of democracy differ entirely from those usually held. I wonder if Mr. Varkey is aware that a very large number of Catholics have opposed General Franco, and the Basque country, which is ardently Catholic, fought bitterly against him. Further that a vast number of people in other countries, who are neither communists nor socialists, have condemned General Franco and his methods.

But I need not discuss the merits or demerits of General Franco. There are plenty of books and other materials for any person to judge. What I am concerned with is Mr. Varkey's defiance of the Congress resolutions in regard to Spain. The Tripuri Congress had reaffirmed these

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. C.J. Varkey, Education Minister of Madras, 1938-39, said at a public meeting that General Franco and Spain had been misunderstood and people had often been misled by wrong reports. General Franco stood for religion and democracy and was warring against the communists.

resolutions.<sup>3</sup> It is astonishing that a minister of a Congress government should openly go against the Congress policy. If he feels that it is his duty to preach crusades against the Congress resolutions and policy, then his place is outside the Congress and outside the Congress ministry. It will be highly unbecoming for a controversy of this character to be carried on in public between Mr. Varkey and Congressmen. And yet it is obviously not possible to remain quiet when Congress ministers indulge in these fantasies.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Mr. Varkey directly. I shall wait for your and his reply before making any statement of mine on the subject.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

3. The Tripuri Congress passed a resolution disapproving "the recognition of rebel Spain" by the British Government.

## 9. To Leonard K. Elmhirst<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
March 21, 1939

Dear Elmhirst,<sup>2</sup>

Thank you for your letter of March 2nd. I have looked through the two broadsheets issued by P.E.P. which you have sent me and I have found them very interesting. We have already written for a complete set of publications of the P.E.P. both for our Congress office here and for the planning committee.

I met Dr. Sudhir Sen<sup>3</sup> at Sriniketan and had a good talk with him. I hope we shall have his cooperation in our planning work.

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. (1893-1974); founder-director, rural reconstruction institute, Sriniketan, Visva Bharati, and of a similar institution, Dartington Hall, in Devonshire in Britain; agricultural adviser to the Bengal Government, 1943; assisted in the development of the Damodar Valley Corporation and the plant-breeding research institute at Almora.
3. (b. 1906); an economist; assisted in rural development work at Sriniketan, 1939-42; later served the Government of India and the United Nations; author of several books and reports on economic problems.



I am surprised to read in your letter that someone told you that it was not possible for me to meet Ford Robertson<sup>4</sup> at Almora. This of course is absurd. I meet everybody. There never has been a difficulty about my meeting specialists and experts whoever they might be. There have been difficulties occasionally in my meeting persons like the Viceroy of India as such a meeting has certain political significance. But during the last few months I have even met the Viceroy.

It is quite natural for the Congress to try to utilise the services of competent Indians and even to prefer them to outsiders. In the past, a deliberate policy was followed to ignore Indians and to give them no opportunities of growth even though their qualifications might be high. But, in spite of this, I do not think there is any desire whatever on the part of the Congress to push out a competent English officer or expert. Unfortunately the average I.C.S. man, whether he is English or Indian, is generally wholly incompetent for any specialised work. He is also not of much use outside the rut he has functioned in so long. We lack really efficient men especially, both among Indians and Europeans, here. Where we find such a person we desire to hold on to him whoever he might be.

It is true that owing to a state of instability of our political and economic life, it is difficult to develop an atmosphere for real constructive work. Still this has to be done. As you say, even a study and a definition of the problem is a good beginning, and sometime or other we shall profit by this work, even though wars may come with all their horror and destruction.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

4. Deputy commissioner of forests, Almora division, 1938-40.

## 10. Provincial Governments—Wake Up<sup>1</sup>

Our provincial governments are very busy. It is the busiest time of the year for them. Budgets are being discussed and criticised and, where

1. Signed article written at Lucknow, 28 March 1939. *National Herald*, 30 March 1939. Reprinted in *The Unity of India*, (London, 1941), pp. 147-154.

long-established vested interests are touched, angry and sorrowful cries rend the air. Our ministers work hard and late and wear themselves out in the process. Some may envy their high position, others may intrigue for preferment to ministership. But few who have come in close contact with the work of our ministers would care to take their place and shoulder the heavy burdens and responsibility and drudgery that is their lot. They have worked faithfully and unceasingly for India and for the cause for which the Congress has laboured, and if the success that has come to them has not been as great as we hoped, it is foolish and uncharitable to cast the blame on them. Their achievement has indeed been considerable and worthy of pride.

And yet, and yet, the sands run out and this mad world rushes on, and problems multiply, and if we do not keep pace with them we perish. The world of today is not for the complacent or the slow of foot or those who are the slaves of events.

It is this realisation that has increasingly gripped India, and behind the unseemly controversy about the Congress presidential election at Tripuri, behind the personal conflicts and the growth of adventurism, there lies this vital urge of our people, their desire to shake themselves out of the rut of complacency and to play their part in the dynamic world of today. The resolution on the national demand, unhappily somewhat overshadowed by controversy on personal issues, was the resolution of the Congress and it embodied this vital urge.<sup>2</sup> Provincial autonomy, it said, is rapidly exhausting its possibilities and the time has come, both nationally and internationally, when the great step forward must be taken. If our ministers and provincial governments, as well as the Congress organisation, realise this change in objective conditions and in the temper of our people, and put themselves in tune with it, then it is well with them. Otherwise they will lose grip and grow increasingly ineffective and wrapped up in their petty problems and difficulties. It is not by pursuing a policy of drift that major problems are solved in a revolutionary age. We cannot merely carry on, or else we shall all be carried away to none knows where.

The communal problem faces us threateningly, and yet it grows ever clearer that in its essence it is a political problem and not just a communal one. Bloody riots have occurred in the United Provinces and open and unabashed provocation to murder and violence has had free

2. On 11 March 1939, the Tripuri Congress passed a resolution reiterating the uncompromising opposition of the Congress to the federal scheme, demanded the setting up of a constituent assembly and called upon its members and the people to promote unity and strengthen the Congress organisation.



field. Strange stories come of incompetence and mischief-making and toleration of this new phase of violence. A few riots need not frighten us, distressing as they are. Let us not forget that the vast majority of our population lives peacefully and is unaffected by the mischief of a few. But even so we must discover the secret springs behind these disturbances and take steps to put an end to this growing violence and terrorism. All men and women of goodwill, to whatever party or group they might belong, must desire this. Those who are in official charge of the functions of government in local areas must realise their responsibilities and appreciate that their failure to curb this violence is a black stain on their record and reputation. It is possible that the best of administrators might be overwhelmed temporarily by the course of events. It is also possible, and the presumption is not unjustified, that incompetence or mischief often lies behind these disturbances. We can tolerate neither incompetence nor mischief-making, nor can we drift while these flourish.

Our problems fill our minds. Yet the problem of problems today, overshadowing all else, is the growth and triumph of gangsterism in international affairs. The lights go out in Europe and elsewhere, the shadows increase, and in the darkness freedom is butchered and brutal violence reigns. Tragedy envelops us, heart-breaking tragedy, as we see the death of nation after nation, the vast suffering and misery of millions of people crushed by barbarian feet. 'Brotherhood', 'sisterhood' are bastard creeds, says Signor Mussolini; only the sword counts with him, the sword that kills freedom and democracy and puts an end to the culture and civilisation of ages. Spain of the republic and of freedom is no more, only the bright and imperishable memory of her glorious struggle remains. Czechoslovakia used to be on the map of Europe; it is no more, and Herr Hitler's minions trample on her brave children, betrayed so shamefully by England and France. From day to day we await in suspense what this dictator or that says; anxiously we wonder what the next aggression will be.

How does all this affect India? Dare we ignore these tremendous happenings in Europe? India's freedom will not be worth many days' purchase if fascism and Nazism dominate the world. Our own existence is bound up with the fate of freedom and democracy in the world. Only a union of freedom-loving peoples and their mutual cooperation can avert the common peril. For that union India must stand.

But let us not forget recent history. It is not Hitler or Mussolini who have created the present crisis in Europe. Ultimately it is the policy of the British Government supported by the French Government. There is a great deal of talk of the democracies defending freedom against the

onslaughts of fascism. But it is these very so-called democracies of western Europe that have helped and encouraged fascism and Nazism and done to death the Spanish Republic and Czechoslovakia. If one man more than another is responsible for the Europe of today it is Mr. Neville Chamberlain. If there has been and is danger to democracy and freedom it is due more to Mr. Chamberlain and his policy than to any other.

Let us not talk, therefore, of Mr. Chamberlain's government or Messieurs Daladier and Bonnet's government as democracies, and so long as these governments or their like continue, no one will consider them the champions of democracy. They have too much blood of the free on their hands, too many betrayals to their credit, for them to pose as democrats or lovers of freedom. Even if they are forced to fight fascism, no one will trust their good faith or their motives, and they will yet again betray the cause which they trumpet so loudly. Behind the gallant speeches even today, what intrigues are going on, what base manoeuvres, what contemplated betrayals? Even terrible danger on the doorstep and in the sky overhead does not shake Mr. Chamberlain's faith in his Munich policy or bring light to the darkness of his fascist mind.

Certainly India will not fall in line with Mr. Neville Chamberlain's policy in peace or in war. She will oppose it and resist it, for it is the embodiment of the imperialism and fascism which she detests. But England and France have still the instinct of democracy, although this may be hidden by the Chamberlains, Halifaxes and Simons; their peoples still care for freedom. If this instinct finds proper expression and really stands up for the defence of democracy, then India can certainly look favourably on it and lend her hand in support.

But India cannot support democracy elsewhere without democracy for her own people. An India dominated by imperialism can only think in terms of resisting that imperialism. Only freedom and complete self-determination for us can convince us of the *bona fides* of the British Government; only these can create the conditions for mutual cooperation in the face of common peril.

We have been recently told on behalf of the British Government that the Government of India Act holds and will continue. If that is the British answer to us, then our path is clear; it is one of resistance to British imperialism, whatever the consequences might be. It is whispered also that an attempt is being made to restrict the powers of the provincial governments in the event of war, by giving executive authority in the provinces to the central government. If this attempt is made, it will be fought to the uttermost.



It has not been our policy or habit to bargain or blackmail in times of crisis. We function differently, and we shall continue this policy whether war comes or not. But we can only function in terms of the dignity and freedom of the Indian people, and no other conditions are acceptable to us. The issues before us are not academic; they are of the Here and Now, vital for the interests of India, of England and the world. We offer our cooperation for freedom and democracy well realising the imminent peril of today. But we offer the cooperation of a free people and not of a slave nation. The conspiracy against freedom, in the name of 'appeasement' or a bogus peace, has gone far enough, and it is time it was halted, if the world is not to perish in widespread catastrophe.

The provincial governments, functioning in the sphere of the provinces, cannot ignore the wider issues. They have to play their part in this vital drama which is changing the face of things. They may be asked to act in a hundred ways which, though apparently innocuous, yet affect these wider issues. They dare not forget them and every step they might take, big or small, must be guided by these broader considerations and by the basic policy of the Congress. They have, of course, to resist any encroachment on their present powers. But they have to do much more than merely act on the defensive. They have to be vigilant guardians of our cause and to prepare themselves for all eventualities. That is a heavy responsibility and they must prove worthy of it. Wake up, provincial governments!

## 11. Standards of Public Conduct<sup>1</sup>

I have learnt with deep regret of the deplorable incidents that took place in the Kaisarbagh Baradari yesterday.<sup>2</sup> I have taken considerable care to find out the real facts and have read many reports and had eye-witnesses' accounts. These facts are clear enough and there is a remarkable consensus of opinion in regard to them.

1. Statement to the press, Lucknow, 30 March 1939. *National Herald*, 31 March 1939.
2. Several Congressmen and their sympathisers were injured in Lucknow on 29 March 1939 when they were attacked by some Europeans and others who had met to protest against the employment tax bill introduced by the Congress ministry in U.P.

There can be no doubt that the behaviour of a few of the organisers of the meeting, including some Europeans, was offensive and undesirable in the extreme, and the way Seth Damodar Swarup and other well-known Congressmen were beaten and ill-treated was not only exceedingly provocative but highly objectionable and wholly uncalled for from any point of view. Many distinguished non-Congressmen who were present agree with this. It is clear that but for this unprovoked violence there would have been nothing untoward in the course of the meeting.

A dozen or so persons could not, even if they so wished, interfere with the course of the meeting. It is also clear that Shri Mohanlal Gautam and other Congressmen present exercised a soothing and restraining influence on the crowd that subsequently came in and thereby prevented worse development.

While I greatly regret the behaviour of some of the organisers and consider it a deplorable sign of the lowering of the standards of public conduct, I am more concerned with what Congressmen and their sympathisers do. I venture to claim that I have a right to advise them and to point out to them the consequences of their conduct. Our policy of nonviolence is not merely a negative policy; it is essentially a positive policy and a technique with numerous implications, and we may not forget this fundamental basis and these implications.

Owing to various causes there is a spirit of violence in the air, most evident in the communal disturbances, and we have to be especially on our guard to do nothing which encourages it or promotes disintegration and indiscipline.

We call ourselves the representatives of the people; if so we have a heavy responsibility. It is not enough that we should individually behave correctly; we have to see that others also do so.

If the Kaisarbagh meeting was a private meeting, limited to those invited to it, it was not desirable for others to attend it. Congressmen should not have gone to it. The mere fact that a private meeting was held indicated that public sentiment was against it. That public sentiment could have expressed itself forcibly in other ways, through a public meeting or otherwise. Therefore I think that it was unfortunate that any Congressmen should have attended the meeting.

I do not think it is proper for Congressmen to attend any such purdah meetings. It is not in consonance with the dignity of the Congress. I feel also that when asked to leave the meeting, on the ground that it was private, Congressmen should have left. Further I feel that the subsequent behaviour of the crowd that came in was deplorable. I do not know who these people were, and I know that they were checked and later controlled by the Congressmen present. But the mere fact



that they came as sympathisers of the Congress makes us all responsible for their actions. I realise fully that the provocation on the part of some of the organisers was very great, but we have never made provocation an excuse for retaliation. And we must remember that the Congressmen who were present at the meeting went on their own initiative and uninvited.

The injuries that have been received by various people are not serious and will heal, but such incidents leave a trail of violence behind them which affects our work in every direction. In the atmosphere of today we must avoid everything that adds to inner conflict and disruption.

## 12. To Mahatma Gandhi<sup>1</sup>

Lucknow  
April 1, 1939

My dear Bapu,

I have your letter of the 30th March together with copies of correspondence with Subhas. Jaya Prakash met me yesterday for a short time on his way to Patna. I think that there is little to be said beyond what you have written to Subhas.<sup>2</sup>

The Lucknow Baradari incident was very unfortunate. But still I hope that you will not attach too much importance to it. I am sending you the *National Herald* report of this incident. This is a truthful report by a competent eye-witness. The next day I issued a statement in regard to the incident, a copy of which I enclose also.<sup>3</sup> A letter by Gautam in the press also helps in understanding the background.<sup>4</sup>

The communal situation is very disturbing. There are certain novel features about it. In past years, when such riots occurred, there was a great deal of emotion and passion in the multitude. For instance, last

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. Mahatma Gandhi wrote to Subhas Bose on 30 March 1939 that his choice of the Working Committee should be unfettered and the Committee need not be homogeneous in character but may be composed mainly of the members backing Subhas' policy. He himself would not be a party to 'self-suppression' by Subhas Bose as against 'voluntary self-effacement'.

3. See the preceding item.

4. Mohanlal Gautam argued that it was an unprovoked attack made on a few Congressmen.

year the Allahabad riot was clearly of political origin but still large masses of people were affected and were excited. This year it is even more purely political and it is patently superficial. That is to say that there is no passion or emotion visible in the city. There is a certain amount of fear and some resentment. Clearly, these riots tend to be brought about purely to exercise a certain political pressure. It also seems that people are slightly getting used to them and are not quite so frightened by them as they used to be. Today in Allahabad there is no feeling of general panic or suppressed emotion. A fair amount of business is being done. Most shops are open, and yet odd cases of stabbing occur in out of the way places. There are no big crowds or conflict on a mass scale. Generally people are irritated and bored at what is happening. There is no local or religious problem which has to be solved. This forenoon I drove through parts of the city and saw three stabbing cases which had occurred about five minutes before I arrived. In each case the man who had done the deed had disappeared.

In my mind the local leaders of the Muslim League must certainly be held responsible for much that is happening.

I fear this individual violence on a small scale will continue in some of our cities for some days. Gradually it will fade out. It is not easy to deal with it for either the Congressmen or the police.

As for your suggestion about the ministry, I do not think it is at all feasible.<sup>5</sup> No sudden change will make much difference, while it may well give rise to additional problems. Of course, so far as I am concerned, I am perfectly willing to help the U.P. ministry in every way.

Yours affectionately,  
Jawaharlal

5. Mahatma Gandhi suggested that either Jawaharlal should assume the prime ministership of U.P. "to control the unruly elements" or the ministry should be dissolved.



### 13. To Yusuf Meerza<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
April 4, 1939

Dear Prince Yusuf Meerza,<sup>2</sup>

I have just received your telegram. I entirely agree with you that Shias, not only as a minority community but as citizens of India, have a right to every protection. As you know, the *Mad-he-Sahaba*<sup>3</sup> agitation has been troubling the U.P. Government for a long time past, and they have given their most earnest consideration to it. It was and is essentially a matter for the Muslims to decide, and for a non-Muslim to intervene in a religious matter seems to be out of place. Unfortunately, in spite of every effort, no such compromise was arrived at. I am not in the confidence of the government, and therefore I can only speak on my own behalf. When there is such a conflict between two groups and no mutual arrangement is arrived at, the government has to accept the principle of civil liberty subject to the preservation of peace. I suppose the U.P. Government thought on these lines. I understand that their last *communiqué*, following their previous statement, accepted this principle and in order to give it practical application permitted the Sunnis to recite the *Mad-he-Sahaba* on one day in the year. The alternative to this was, as we have seen, a daily recitation of it by large numbers of people; thus there is not only continuous conflict with the government but also a continuous wounding of Shia sentiment. Obviously such matters have to be resolved ultimately by the goodwill and spirit of forbearance of the people concerned. It is not good enough to enforce decisions on unwilling people for long. I would beg of you to exercise your influence in the direction of forbearance so that the spirit of animosity which leads to deliberate wounding of others' sentiments, might end.

I am not directly connected with this matter or with the government's decision. But I am eager and willing to help, where I can, to put an end to mutual ill will and conflict. I am forwarding your telegram to the Prime Minister of the U.P. Government.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. (b. 1903); a grandson of Wajid Ali Shah, the last ruler of Avadh.

3. The praise of the Caliphs.

**14. Kisans Should Strengthen the Congress<sup>1</sup>**

The hands of the popular ministers are tied and the Government of India Act has placed one hundred and one hurdles in the way of any popular measure having a smooth passage through the provincial legislatures. The Congress has been doing its best through the legislatures to bring relief to the tenants. The first act in that connection was to stay proceedings for realising arrears of rent. This was followed by other measures like the debt relief acts and so on. At present, the U.P. legislature is engaged in changing the old laws of tenancy. The tenancy bill has passed through several stages, but many more remain to be gone through, and I hope that the Congress Party in the assembly would pilot the bill successfully. I would, however, want the kisans to remember that in a House consisting of 228 members matters have to move slowly. There are a number of zamindars who are opposed to the bill and whose points of view should be considered during the passage of the bill. The bill will again have to go through the provincial council, which consists of men of landed interests who would fight hard against such popular measures. It is, therefore, the duty of the kisans to strengthen the hands of the Congress organisation so that it may fight their battles and win for them what they valued most.

The interests of the kisans are common, be they Hindus or Muslims. The kisans whether they are Hindus or Muslims have to pay rents. They both have to acquire rights over the land that they cultivate. They have to work shoulder to shoulder in establishing their rights and in getting their wrongs redressed and their burdens relieved. The Congress, having taken up the cause of the kisans, has made no distinction between one kisan and another. It is, therefore, the bounden duty of every kisan, be he a Hindu or a Muslim, to strengthen the Congress organisation. There are some people, who, in order to break the solidarity of the kisans, have introduced communal considerations into their ranks. The kisans should be very careful with such people.

It is also not proper for the kisans to run to the ministers seeking jobs and other favours. It would undermine the prestige of the Congress and affect its work. Nor should the villagers go to the police for

1. Speech at a meeting of kisans at Karchana in Allahabad district, 16 April 1939. From *National Herald*, 20 April 1939.



the settlement of their petty disputes and quarrels. They should decide these among themselves.

The kisans should not also imagine that their problems would end with the solution of the questions concerning rent and revenue. They, being the people who supplied men and money for the defence and the running of the government of the country, should know what is going on outside the country. If they would only know what is going on in China at present, they would realise that the tenants in the villages are not free from the effects of war. There is the danger of war ahead of them, which may be just as big as the last Great War. The kisans should also realise that they possess the right to ask the British Government as to why Indians should fight for them. Certain laws are being enacted by the government in England, which would compel Indians to fight British wars. Kisans should therefore see whether their interests would be served if Indians were compelled to join such a war. In other words, kisans would have to ask the government whether such a war was for the freedom of India or not. If not, then they should refuse to fight.

In the elections to the *halqa* committees that will engage you during the next week, I would like to urge upon you to give sufficient chance to the Muslim members to get into the Congress committees.

It would only be through the combined efforts of the Hindus and the Muslims that the Congress organisation would be strengthened.

## 15. To Abul Kalam Azad<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
April 17, 1939

My dear Maulana,

I received your letter yesterday afternoon. I felt that it was perhaps too late for me to go to Lucknow to meet Sir Sultan Ahmed.<sup>2</sup> If, however, my presence there is required or he asks me to go, I shall certainly do so.

I sent your letter in original last night by messenger to Rafi Ahmed and asked him to show it to the other ministers. I fear there has been

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. (1880-1963); lawyer of Patna; attended the Round Table Conference, 1930-31; law member, Viceroy's executive council, 1937 and 1941-45.

much bungling about this issue. Hafiz Ibrahim was particularly in charge of it and considerable pressure was brought to bear upon him by Maulana Husain Ahmad. The deputy commissioner also was very excited and pressed for an early decision by the government. Pantji, unfortunately, was and has been a very sick man, thoroughly tired out and with no freshness left about him. Rafi also had been unwell and had gone away for a few days' rest. The matter was thus decided in a hurry without full consideration of the consequences. Of course, they should have referred to you. The fact is that the ministry is weary with work and responsibility and tends to become stale.

Pantji was so unwell that he had to leave Lucknow immediately after and I am not sure that he has come back yet.

I understand that Maulana Husain Ahmad is very displeased with Moulvi Abdul Shukur<sup>3</sup> as the latter did not play fair with him. Zaffar-ul-mulk<sup>4</sup> is probably still in prison (though I am not sure of this) because he refused to agree to the settlement.

If I can be of any use whatever, I shall gladly offer myself.

Yours affectionately,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

3. A Sunni leader of Lucknow.

4. A Sunni leader of Lucknow; took part in the struggle for freedom; member, Kanpur Riots Enquiry Committee, 1931, appointed by the A.I.C.C.

## 16. To Rajendra Prasad<sup>1</sup>

Lucknow  
May 12, 1939

My dear Rajendra Babu,  
Pantji has just shown me your letter dated 11th May regarding the *Mad-he-Sahaba* controversy. It is difficult to write about this in any detail as the subject is frightfully complicated, although on the surface it is simple enough. I have been hung up in Lucknow for the last week because of this as I do not want to go away till the matter is settled.

1. Rajendra Prasad Papers, National Archives of India.



All the ministers are giving a great deal of time to this matter and everything possible is being done. Our efforts are devoted to bringing about an amicable settlement \*\*\*<sup>2</sup>

In the alternative, we want to do something which will at least put an end to the present civil disobedience, and produce a better atmosphere for the settlement.<sup>3</sup> What government intends doing in this case is to keep the *communiqué* of March 31st, 1939, which gave the right of a procession or meeting to the Sunnis, intact. Also to give an equivalent right to the Shias too for procession and meeting subject to one important qualification that there should be no *Tabarra*. As a matter of fact, the Shias are agreeable not to exercise this right for the present even though it is given to them. We are now considering the terms of the *communiqué* that should be issued on these lines in case the efforts at compromise fail for the present. We hope that there will be some outcome to all this in the course of two or three days at the most.

We are consulting all manner of people, Shias and Sunnis, so that any step that we might take might be generally approved of.

I am afraid Sir Sultan Ahmed managed to gather many wrong impressions during his visits to Lucknow. He has created a bad impression among his own Shia colleagues here and they are dissatisfied with him. The government's position has all along been that they will gladly give effect to any compromise. Otherwise, they must stick to their *communiqué* of March 31st. In the course of the negotiations, some Sunni leaders said that they hoped to bring round the others. Thereupon Rafi Ahmed informed Sir Sultan Ahmed that in case the Sunnis agreed, the government would also gladly agree. As ultimately the Sunnis did not agree, the government perforce could not. There was no breach of agreement by either the Sunnis or the government. It is difficult of course in such matters to treat any one or two individuals as recognised leaders of a community.

I am staying on here till this matter is settled one way or the other. I have just had a telephone conversation with Maulana Azad and have explained to him the situation. He agreed with the general line we were adopting.

Yours affectionately,  
Jawaharlal

2. Portion of letter moth-eaten.

3. As the U.P. Government had granted permission to the Sunnis to recite *Mad-he-Sahaba* in public, the Shias had launched an agitation to get similar permission for public recital of *Tabarra* (cursing of the first three Caliphs).

## 17. To Rajendra Prasad<sup>1</sup>

Lucknow  
May 14, 1939

My dear Rajendra Babu,

After numerous difficulties and hitches we had hoped that the government would issue its *communiqué* yesterday regarding the Shia-Sunni trouble. All the Shia leaders whom we had consulted agreed to certain drafts and the whole thing was got ready for publication. In the evening we learnt, however, that the *mujtahids* who are the religious leaders of the Shias were not agreeable to the course suggested. So the matter stands hung up for the moment. Perhaps they might be brought round today by their colleagues.

Because of this I have had to stay on in Lucknow and Pantji, who was going to Naini Tal for rest, has also stayed on.

Yours affectionately,  
Jawaharlal

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

## 18. All India Political Prisoners' Day<sup>1</sup>

The Congress President has fixed Monday, May 21, as the All India Political Prisoners' Day. I trust that this day will be observed throughout the province by the holding of meetings, and the demand will be put forward for the release of all political prisoners who are still in prison in some provinces which are not under Congress control. At these meetings, the resolution passed by the All India Congress Committee at Calcutta recently should be read out.<sup>2</sup>

1. Statement to the press, Lucknow, 15 May 1939. *National Herald*, 16 May 1939.
2. The A.I.C.C., on 1 May 1939, urged the release of political prisoners in Bengal and Punjab and called upon the Working Committee to devise ways and means for starting an all-India movement for the release of these prisoners.



I should particularly like to draw the attention of the Congressmen not only in this province, but all over India, to Thakur Chandra Singh, the Garhwali prisoner, who has spent nearly nine years in prison. All his colleagues of the Garhwali regiment have been released, but this brave man of whom any country can be proud is still kept imprisoned. It is a sad commentary on our present state that we have so far failed to get him released. We should not tolerate this, and I hope that his name will be particularly mentioned on the political prisoners' day.

## 19. To Rajendra Prasad<sup>1</sup>

Lucknow  
May 17, 1939

My dear Rajendra Babu,  
Your letter of the 13th May. I am afraid it will be very difficult to find time for the Jamshedpur arbitration.<sup>2</sup> The whole of June will be taken up by various committees in Bombay. In July I shall have to go to the Frontier Province if I can possibly leave the U.P.

Meanwhile the Shia affairs refused to be solved. We are still carrying on but for the moment I have little hope. Pantji has gone to Naini Tal for some weeks. He has been consistently unwell and tired out. Rafi has had a heart attack and is laid up.

I am fairly well now.

Yours affectionately,  
Jawaharlal

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. Jawaharlal and Rajendra Prasad were accepted by the rival unions in the Tata Iron and Steel Company to act as arbitrators in their disputes following a strike in March 1939.

## 20. To Vallabhbhai Patel<sup>1</sup>

Lucknow  
May 17, 1939

My dear Vallabhbhai,

I have your letter of the 12th May. We were all expecting you in Lucknow. I was here for ten days entirely occupied with the Shia-Sunni dispute. This is a frightful tangle. We thought we had come to a settlement several times but new difficulties arose. Even now some kind of conversations are going on. But for the present I see no way out.

I was away in Allahabad for two days and I have returned to Lucknow this morning.

As I have not been reading Bombay papers, I did not know that Kamath had been delivering public speeches in support of the Forward Bloc.<sup>2</sup> I think this was very improper of him. I am taking the matter in hand.

I was somewhat unwell last week but have recovered now. Pantji has been consistently unwell for a long time past and he has gone away to Naini Tal for some weeks. Rafi had a heart attack two days ago and is bed-ridden.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. Vallabhbhai Patel had written that H.V. Kamath, who was a member of the planning committee, had made a speech welcoming the formation of the Forward Bloc and had himself joined it.

## 21. To Rajendra Prasad<sup>1</sup>

Lucknow  
May 17, 1939

My dear Rajendra Babu,

I have just received your letter of the 16th May regarding the Shia-Sunni dispute. I quite appreciate what you say. From every point of

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.



view it is injurious to the national cause that this trouble should go on. It is also true that the Shias as a minority community deserve every protection. So far as I am concerned, I am prepared to do my utmost to find a solution. Rafi Ahmed has been working hard for it, and so has Hafiz Ibrahim.

Of the two courses that you suggest, one, the prohibition of the processions on both sides, is a proper one. But I fear under existing circumstances this is almost an impossible course. It will give rise to a feeling that the government does not function at all and collapses before every agitation. There will be a fiercer agitation on the part of the Sunnis. That is why we have tried our best to get the Sunni leaders to agree to give up their right of procession. We have not succeeded thus far. The alternative that both should be allowed processions has been accepted by the government with one proviso that there should be no *Tabarra* as such, though fair and legitimate criticism of historical personages of Islam (Sir Sultan Ahmed's phrase) has been accepted. The Shias stick at *Tabarra*. But not to prohibit *Tabarra* will again lead to all manner of difficulties.

I shall keep you in touch with developments and, if necessary, I shall stay on here till the end of the month. If your coming is helpful, I shall certainly request you to come.

Yours affectionately,  
Jawaharlal

## 22. To Vallabhbhai Patel<sup>1</sup>

Lucknow  
May 23, 1939

My dear Vallabhbhai,

Thank you for your letter of the 20th.<sup>2</sup> It is indeed unfortunate that the Shia-Sunni dispute has not been settled. The question is an exceedingly complicated one and it is quite possible that a false step by the ministry might lead to a fiercer agitation all over the province. Many of the Shia leaders recognise that the government have offered them very

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. He offered to help in settling the Shia-Sunni dispute in Lucknow. He also suggested that the U.P. ministry be strengthened.

fair proposals. In fact, they had accepted them but then some others came in the way. The Shia demand is that either the government should withhold the right given to the Sunnis for a procession in praise of the companions of the Prophet or should allow the Shias to curse these companions in public processions. Suddenly to take away the right from the Sunnis would give rise to an upheaval, and to give the Shias the right to curse openly would be not only highly improper but would again result in trouble on a big scale. What the government has been trying to do is to get the Sunnis to agree to give up their right of procession themselves. This is highly likely provided the Shias stop their public agitation of *Tabarra* which is cursing. At the same time, the government have promised the Shias an equivalent right of procession, etc., subject to there being no *Tabarra*, but fair and legitimate criticism being allowed. I do not see what other attitude the government can take in the matter.

The present position is that about 9,500 persons have been arrested and sentenced to short terms. Of these about a thousand have apologised and come out. Another two thousand have been released after completing their short terms. Within two or three weeks another three or four thousands are likely to be out in the ordinary course. Most of the sentences have been of one month or two months.

It is quite extraordinary to realise the bitterness of feelings between the Shias and the Sunnis.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal

### 23. To Rajendra Prasad<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
May 27, 1939

My dear Rajendra Babu,

I received your letter sending copy of a telegram from Raja Manzoor Hussain.<sup>2</sup> The points mentioned in that telegram have been dealt with to a large extent in the U.P. Council to the satisfaction\*\*\*<sup>3</sup>

1. Rajendra Prasad Papers, National Archives of India.

2. A Shia leader of the Punjab.

3. Portion of letter moth-eaten.



As for the Shia press, it has been printing the most offensive and violent articles and the government had to stop this by asking security from the press which printed them.

Regarding the Punjab prisoners, it is true that all of them were arrested under section 107. They were behaving in a most offensive and violent way. They used to go up and down between policemen, using very bad language to them and sometimes spitting in their faces, when they were Sunnis. They were threatening violence all the time and there was danger that the Sunnis might retaliate. The district magistrate, therefore, decided to arrest them even before they offered themselves for arrest.

Matters in Lucknow seem to have reached a stalemate. I came away therefore but I have told Pantji that he can send for me when he wants me. A large number of Shia prisoners, probably exceeding three thousand, have been released on completing their short terms or on apologising.

Yours affectionately,  
Jawaharlal

## 24. The Problems before the Congress<sup>1</sup>

About the appointment of the members of the Congress Working Committee, I would certainly favour the idea of nomination but I would urge the need for exercise of some check and control over the Congress President. Therefore I would suggest that the Working Committee should be nominated before or at the time of the Congress session, so that the Congress session or the A.I.C.C. might ratify the President's decision.

One of the chief difficulties that faces the Congress is about the organisational work. In the United Provinces, we are faced with such a problem on a provincial scale. Congress membership has become large and there is also a scramble to get into Congress offices with the result that elections have become complicated.

In order to meet the situation, the provincial Congress committee has separated the judiciary from the executive in the Congress organisation. All the election petitions and matters regarding disciplinary action are

1. Interview to the press, Bombay, 3 June 1939. From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 4 June 1939.

decided by the provincial Congress tribunal, and the decisions are accepted by the parties concerned. The personnel of such a tribunal consists of three persons who have retired from active politics, and they are the persons who are not members of any Congress committees.

Question: Is the decision of the tribunal ever challenged?

Jawaharlal Nehru: No, never. All these twenty years we have never appealed to the A.I.C.C.

Q: Do you think there should be an appellate court?

JN: I don't think there should be an appellate court. No such machinery should be set up at the centre. If, however, the district committees adopted the right method, then the process would be easier.

Q: Does not the tribunal tend to become legalistic?

JN: It is true that the tribunal tended to become legalistic. But there is such a mass of litigation that it has become a day-to-day job.

Secondly, we have tried to introduce a kind of Congress civil service. The service is manned by inspectors, auditors and other officers who are, in a way, unconnected with Congress politics. It is called the Provincial National Service and has at present about sixty persons. They are paid employees and payment is made to them mainly from the four-anna membership subscriptions. Membership subscriptions are divided between groups of villages, towns, districts and the province, so that each unit would get an anna each. The officers in the force have to keep themselves free from various factions.

Q: What have you to say about Gandhiji's undertaking a fast over the Rajkot affair?

JN: Gandhiji's action in regard to Rajkot is not immediately comprehensible. A fast would be, of course, always coercive. But I am not against coercion.

Q: How do you view the struggle going on at present in a number of Indian states?

JN: It is frightfully difficult to profess about the future of the states struggle. I have discussed the situation with some states' leaders and



have tried to understand the position. It seems to me that there is a tendency to shift the burden and responsibility on to the shoulders of others. The people of the states want the burden to be borne by others. Of course, such a situation has developed there due to lack of leadership and good human material and other factors.

Q: Do you think the Congress elections should be held once in two years or so?

JN: The Congress members mainly approach the people through the annual membership campaign. It enables them to go to the villages. I must, however, admit that there are signs of corruption to be noticed in the elections as some monied men can enrol a large number of members and capture the Congress organisation. Large 'bloc membership' is really dangerous because local Congress committees might be captured by some zamindars. It is also possible that British imperialism might influence elections. It is really surprising that it has not done so so far under the present circumstances.

Q: What will be India's attitude to a world war?

JN: There are at present three ways to meet the situation. First, there should be general propaganda. Secondly, by countering such steps as the provincial governments might take, chiefly in connection with the India Act Amending Bill and war preparations. And, thirdly, the Congress Working Committee should be clear in its own mind as to the possibilities, probabilities or developments regarding the war situation. It is true the Congress Working Committee cannot lay down any hard and fast rule because nobody knows what developments are likely to take place. The Congress resolution on war should not be regarded as a simple one, nor is the situation a simple one.

If there is a war between fascism and democracy as such, then inevitably India would desire the defeat of fascism and wish democracy to win. A victory of fascism would mean a loss to us too. As a subject nation, we are bound to be exploited.

Q: Can you imagine the theoretical possibility of India joining in a war for the sake of democracy?

JN: Though I may agree with the suggestion, our attitude would be uncertain because we do not know now how Gandhiji would react to a war which is not being fought nonviolently. What would be Gandhiji's

attitude towards a war being waged for the cause of pure democracy, I do not know. It needs to be emphasised that resistance against aggression cannot be constitutional. In the beginning, constitutional steps might be taken but ultimately the only resistance which would mean anything would be to break away from the British Government and that resistance would not be constitutional. In a sense, Gandhiji's technique might look pacifist but that is the technique he has adopted during the last twenty years.

Q: Do you think a fight will start between the Congress and the British Government?

JN: Acceptance of office has revealed to us our inherent weakness. But starting of a fight lies in our hands and in the hands of the British Government. Gandhiji's main stress has been that we should not force a fight, but when it comes we should not shirk it.

For starting a fight, the presence of certain psychological factors is essential. It is necessary to prepare the organisation for a fight and remove the disruptive and weakening factors arising from the acceptance of office. I must, of course, admit that a fight would liquidate all corrupting influences.

The Congress as it has developed now is not a well-organised organisation. Having toned down at present, it is heading towards an internal crisis. Of course, this is not a new development. The Congress in its long history has passed through many such crises. The people who assume power must show themselves not to be mere agitators. The present switch-over from the sphere of agitation to some other sphere, as a result of the policy of acceptance of office, has been an important factor of development.

Q: What are your views about the Shia-Sunni trouble at Lucknow?

JN: The roots of the Shia-Sunni trouble at Lucknow can be traced to the dispute which had begun about thirteen hundred years ago. The Sunnis insist on praising their Caliphs, but the Shias maintain that some of them were usurpers and intruders. The Shias cannot tolerate the praise bestowed on the Caliphs and hurl abuses on them. The U.P. Government's attitude has been that it is a sectarian matter and the members of the two sects should settle it among themselves. The government's position is very delicate. It is frightfully difficult to impose a settlement on them. There has been a lot of bitterness of feeling. There is, however, no political motive. The bitterness of feeling can also be seen



from the fact that about two to three hundred Shias had given up eating meat because the butchers belonged to the Sunni sect.

It is absurd to say that the Congress is exploiting the situation. I have myself spent three weeks in Lucknow during the trouble and have moved among the people. It has been a terrible nuisance.

Q: Do you approve of hunger strike as a political weapon?

JN: No, I don't approve of it. With the exception of Gandhiji, the use of this weapon has been carried to such ridiculous limits that in my province I had to warn three Congressmen who resorted to it.

## 25. To Vallabhbhai Patel<sup>1</sup>

Bombay  
June 16, 1939

My dear Vallabhbhai,

I am writing to you about Ceylon affairs where the Indian question is becoming very acute. I have no doubt that the Indians there have not been behaving well and have made a mess of things. But the Ceylon Government's activities have been scandalous. I do not know what we can do in the matter, but one thing surely can be and should be done and that is to stop immediately all further emigration of unregistered labour to Ceylon. I understand this is going on still.

Last year the Madras Government took up a strong attitude in regard to the emigration of Indian labour to Malaya and at their instance the Government of India stopped this. The result was that the planters in Malaya became frightened and began to send appeals and deputations to the Government of India. I think that if a similar course is adopted in regard to Ceylon, the government there will begin to see light. I suggest therefore that the Madras Government should insist on a complete stoppage of all kinds of emigration to Ceylon.<sup>2</sup>

I am sending a copy of this letter to Rajagopalachari.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. The Government of India stopped emigration of unskilled labourers to Ceylon from 1 August 1939, but the labour commissioner of Madras was authorised to grant exemptions in particular cases.

## 26. To Rajendra Prasad<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
July 2, 1939

My dear Rajendra Babu,

I have received a note from Shri Rahul Sankrityayan<sup>2</sup> which he wrote apparently from the train as he was being taken to prison. He has asked me to request you and the Bihar ministers that in the event of a hunger strike<sup>3</sup> he should not be fed forcibly. He says that if this is attempted his death is likely.

I do not know very much about the kisan agitation<sup>4</sup> in which he has been arrested. But I should like to tell you that his arrest and the controversy in the press about him has deeply pained many people here. He is greatly respected for his scholarship and learning and the reactions of various people here and elsewhere have been strongly in his favour.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal

1. Rajendra Prasad Papers, National Archives of India.
2. (1892-1963); a scholar of Buddhism and a linguist; founder-member, Communist Party of Bihar and the Bihar Kisan Sabha; taught in universities in Sri Lanka and Leningrad.
3. On 24 February 1939, Rahul Sankrityayan was arrested with twenty volunteers while cutting sugar-cane on kisans' land and sentenced to six months rigorous imprisonment on a charge of theft. In jail, he resorted to hunger strike for recognition of kisans' right to be treated as political prisoners. Ultimately the government had to grant some facilities to kisan prisoners.
4. The forcible seizure by the landlords of land over which the kisans had been given the right of occupancy under the Bihar Tenancy Act resulted in a wide-spread kisan movement in Bihar. It demanded abolition of zamindari, immediate reduction of rent, moratorium on debt payment pending settlement and a higher sugar-cane price.



## 27. A Governmental Lapse<sup>1</sup>

For some time past references have been made in the public press to a circular said to have been issued by the chief secretary of the U.P. Government to the district officers in the province. No official publication of this circular has taken place but unauthorised copies of it have been published, and, so far as we know, not denied by anyone on behalf of the government. It is seldom safe or desirable to rely on such unauthorised publications or to base one's comment on them. But in view of the circumstances and the controversy that has been raised, it is justifiable to presume that some such circular was issued.

This circular deals with the communal situation and calls for stringent action in regard to it. Towards the end of the circular the following sentence occurs: "I am to make it clear that these orders apply also to cases in which class hatred, other than communal, is preached and, in particular, to the kind of class hatred that is preached by communists and results in industrial strikes and trouble between employer and employed." It is suggested that section 153 A of the Indian Penal Code be utilised.

It is this sentence that has caused all the trouble and I must say that I agree with its critics. I am surprised that the U.P. Government should have made itself responsible for a statement which it is difficult to defend, and I can only presume that the sentence crept into the circular owing to someone's lapse or misplaced enthusiasm. If the sentence had been penned by previous provincial governments, it could have been criticised, but it would probably have evoked no surprise. Those governments, through ignorance or design, had a habit of expressing themselves in this loose way and of imagining that by branding communists as the root cause of trouble, or declaiming against 'class hatred', they had half solved the problem. It is not good enough for a Congress government to function in this way, and it is still more regrettable if they have this background of thought. I feel sure that there has been an unfortunate lapse which does not represent, in this respect, the mind of our ministers.

Class hatred, or any form of hatred, is an evil thing. Does anyone imagine that it is the creation of a few agitators? Every man knows, or ought to know, that the present economic structure of society is based

1. Signed article by Jawaharlal printed in *National Herald*, 9 July 1939.

on a division of classes which are inevitably in conflict with each other. To draw attention to this unfortunate and inequitable state, to endeavour to put an end to this class division and conflict, and to change the structure that encourages it, should be the aim of every person or the government who want a juster and more stable society. Not to do so is to perpetuate class conflict. It has been an old practice of those who possess vested interests and want the continuation of the *status quo* to try to hide the true nature of these interests by having recourse to pious phrases. A housing inspector does not create a slum; he exposes it and tries for its removal. A sanitary inspector is not the author of the filth in the rain.

What is the kind of class hatred that is preached by communists? Such vague language, exhibiting lack of knowledge, does not become a government department or a chief secretary. The communists and socialists believe in an economic theory, and it would be a good thing if all government officials studied this theory before they considered themselves competent enough to criticise it or condemn it. A government does not or should not condemn a group of people; it should only condemn those who offend against its laws. Communists, like others, are good or bad or a mixture of the two. One of the most advanced and powerful governments in the world today, with which the British Government is seeking an alliance, is communist.

It is perfectly true that many people who call themselves communists have misbehaved and caused trouble. Condemn them by all means or take such steps as are considered proper. But this condemnation or action must be against the individual who has offended and for that offence.

The application of section 153 A to labour troubles is a dangerous procedure, and I believe that even high courts in India have differed as to the propriety of its use in such cases. This section, if so used, might lead to the suppression of all criticism of the present social structure and the limitation of civil liberty.

The U.P. Government have, in a recent letter to the mazdur sabha of Cawnpore, laid stress on their desire to maintain the enjoyment of civil liberties by all persons. This province has been fortunate in the wide extension of civil liberties since the present government came into power, although unfortunately communal conflict has often necessitated a restriction of these liberties. This letter to the mazdur sabha is to be commended as a whole as indicating the general policy of the government towards labour, though some parts of it are not so welcome. It is satisfactory to learn that a trades disputes bill has been drafted and will



soon see the light of day.<sup>2</sup> It is hoped that this bill will avoid the serious errors which took away so much from the good effects of the Bombay Act. It is also a satisfaction to note that government will take steps to improve the conditions of labour in shops and commercial establishments.

The government is perfectly justified in condemning the far too frequent resort to strikes in Cawnpore and especially the lightning strikes which can be very seldom defended, even if there are substantial grievances. There can be no doubt that labour in Cawnpore has suffered considerably by these frequent and sudden strikes and has lost a good deal of the public sympathy it possessed.

But is a strike always due to the intransigence or pugnacity of labour? The government would have done well to point out the many failings and provocations on the part of the employers in Cawnpore. Have they forgotten the employers' attitude throughout the labour inquiry last year and their contemptuous rejection of its recommendations? Do they not know how aggravating the behaviour of the employers has been during this past year?<sup>3</sup> If the admittedly just demands of labour are rejected, what is to be done? If labour is unjustly penalised, what must labour do? If the government's labour officer's recommendations are ignored, what will government do? If labour acts wrongly then condemn it by all means. But if it is admittedly right, and the employers are patently wrong, will the government protect labour? Or if labour strikes, then will it be an unjustifiable strike?

It is not clear what the government have in mind when they refer to civil liberty in connection with strikes. It sounds suspiciously like the old argument that group bargaining was an infringement of the sacred right of private contract. If the government refer to the practice of blocking up the highway or stopping all ingress and egress by a group of persons lying down on the ground, then I, for one, would join in their condemnation of this. This practice has grown recently and is adopted by all manner of people on all kinds of occasions. I dislike it extremely as I dislike also the hunger strike. I think it will tend to degrade and brutalise us and will soon lose even such value as it might possess today. It is also clear that the government's primary duty is to maintain public tranquillity.

But if this argument is used to hamper justifiable strikes and to restrict legitimate picketing, then it is to be deplored. It is not the maintenance

2. This bill, drafted on the lines of the Bombay Trades Disputes Act of 1938, could not be passed due to the resignation of the Congress ministry in October 1939.

3. See *Selected Works*, Vol. 8, pp. 329-334 and 351-354.

of civil liberty to allow strike-breakers to be imported in order to put an end to a strike.

## 28. To Rajendra Prasad<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
July 11, 1939

My dear Rajendra Babu,  
Thank you for your letter of the 8th July.

The issues raised by the demonstrations of July 9th are far-reaching.<sup>2</sup> I do not know what you propose to do in the matter. But as affairs have come to a head they cannot be ignored. I am issuing a private note to all the members of the executive council of the U.P.P.C.C. I enclose a copy of it for your information.

There is no question of my postponing my Ceylon visit. I am leaving tomorrow. After two days in Bombay I will proceed to Colombo. Should you wish to communicate with me there you can write by air or wire to Colombo.

It does appear that there is no immediate prospect of war, but it is very difficult to be sure and the next six weeks are very critical. If nothing happens during these six weeks I intend adhering to my intention of going to China.<sup>3</sup> I am waiting for the reactions of the Chinese Government to my proposal. The Chinese ambassador in London is encouraging me to go. He has communicated with the government.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. The Left Consolidation Committee, comprising the Congress Socialist Party, the National Front, the Radical Democratic Party and the Forward Bloc, formed in June 1939, held demonstrations on 9 July 1939 throughout the country to protest against the Congress resolutions directing Congressmen not to offer satyagraha without the prior permission of the provincial Congress committees and urging cooperation between the Congress ministries and the provincial Congress committees.
3. Jawaharlal visited China from 20 August to 18 September 1939.



## 29. On the Success of Mass Literacy Campaigns<sup>1</sup>

Many of our provinces have started mass literacy campaigns and achieved success in them. But Bihar was the first in the field and gave a lead to India. It richly deserves the success that has come to it. If India is to go ahead, as she must and will, we have to advance on many fronts simultaneously. But the foundation and basis of all advance is education. I welcome, therefore, these great literacy drives and wish them all success.

1. Message to the Bihar Government, Bombay, 14 July 1939. *National Herald*, 15 July 1939.

## THE CONGRESS MINISTRIES AND THE MUSLIMS

### 30. On Jinnah's Charges against the Congress<sup>1</sup>

Mr. M.A. Jinnah referred in a statement<sup>2</sup> to certain remarks of mine at the Ayodhya conference.<sup>3</sup> I expressed my surprise there that responsible leaders of the Muslim League and Prime Ministers of certain provincial governments should make violent attacks on the Congress provincial governments in a language which could not be called responsible or dignified. I also said that the allegations that atrocities were being committed by the Congress governments were unfounded. Mr. Jinnah says that I am ignorant of what is taking place in my own province. May I request him to have the courtesy to inform me of the atrocities committed in U.P. by the Congress government? I do not yet know what the charges are. May I also suggest to Mr. Jinnah, who is an eminent lawyer, that one-sided charges made would have to be proved before they are to be believed? If Mr. Jinnah agrees, I would be happy to have his charges placed for investigation before any independent and impartial person or persons who could be accepted by him and me as such.

1. Statement to the press, Calcutta, 3 January 1939. *National Herald*, 4 January 1939.
2. In a statement on 1 January 1939, Jinnah, commenting on Jawaharlal's speech at the U.P. Political Conference, stated: "Nehru is either utterly ignorant of what is going on in his own province or he has lost all sense of fairness and justice when he characterises the charges against the Congress Governments as baseless."
3. See pp. 312-318.



### 31. To M.A. Jinnah<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
January 4, 1939

Dear Mr. Jinnah,

I read in the newspapers in Calcutta yesterday your statement regarding some remarks I had made in the Ayodhya conference. As I felt that the charge made against the Congress provincial governments of having committed 'atrocities' on Muslims was a grave one, I ventured to issue a brief statement to the press, a copy of which I enclose.<sup>2</sup>

As I am particularly connected with the United Provinces, I shall be grateful to you if you will let me know what the complaints or charges of 'atrocities' are in the United Provinces. As I have suggested in my statement, I would welcome an investigation by an independent and impartial person or persons.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. See the preceding item.

### 32. To Sikandar Hayat Khan<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
January 4, 1939

Dear Sir Sikandar Hayat,

I have read in the newspapers reports of the speech you delivered at the Patna session of the All India Muslim League.<sup>2</sup> This speech was delivered in support of a resolution<sup>3</sup> condemning various atrocities alleged

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. Sikandar Hayat Khan said on 27 December 1938: "Happenings like these... if they are not stopped but are allowed to grow in number, may lead not only to civil disobedience, but to worse results..." With special reference to the Muslims in the minority provinces, he said that if the need arose, every Punjab Muslim would lay down his life in the defence of Islam.

3. A resolution moved on 27 December 1938 alleged that great atrocities had been committed on the Muslims in Bihar, C.P. and to a lesser extent in the U.P.

to have been committed by the Congress provincial governments on Muslims and threatening resort to direct action against such governments. As I understand your speech, you offered yourself to take part in such action.

Such an offer by a Prime Minister of a provincial government is unusual and, if seriously meant, likely to lead to grave consequences. It is not for me, however, to criticise your speech or to challenge your right to say anything you consider fit and proper although I might disagree with it utterly. Nor do I propose to discuss the propriety of such speeches. But I think that it is due to those who are criticised and condemned to be told what the exact charges or atrocities are. I am closely connected with the United Provinces and I am totally unaware of any such charges. May I request you therefore to enlighten me?<sup>4</sup>

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

4. In his reply of 14 February 1939, Sikandar Hayat Khan denied that any speaker had attributed any atrocities to Congress governments but had merely referred to high-handedness of the majority community in some of the Congress provinces.

### 33. On Charges of Atrocities On Muslims<sup>1</sup>

Mr. M.A. Jinnah invites controversy by what he says and the manner of saying it. But I have no desire to carry on a controversy on this or any other subject but rather to end it by getting at the facts. Mr. Jinnah and other leaders of the Muslim League have charged the Congress governments with committing 'atrocities'. This is a very serious charge. Similar charges have been made previously by Mr. Fazlul Huq and he has been asked repeatedly to supply details. He has not done so. Mr. Jinnah draws my attention to the report of the Raja of Pirpur's committee and I shall certainly read it with care. I would have done so already but for the difficulty in obtaining copies of it.

1. Statement to the press, Allahabad, 8 January 1939. *The Leader*, 10 January 1939.



Mr. Jinnah has suggested that I do not know my province and in his last statement<sup>2</sup> has mentioned the names of four places which presumably have been the scenes of governmental 'atrocities' in the U.P. These four places are Tanda, Bhadri, Bhagalpur and Hazari Bagh. Evidently, Mr. Jinnah is mistaken as two of these places are not in the U.P. at all.

I do not think there is any difficulty in having an impartial inquiry into specific charges. No question of sanctions or powers arises. Mr. Jinnah and I are both anxious to get at the truth which may confirm our previously held opinions or be at variance with them. We want the assistance of impartial investigation for this. If we get such an impartial opinion then the next step will be to determine what more is to be done in the matter. It should not be difficult to fix upon one or two or three persons whose judgment and impartiality can be relied upon by Mr. Jinnah and others. Preferably, they should not be connected with the Congress or League viewpoint. I do not come into the picture at all, but I am sure that the U.P. Government will give every facility to any such persons to find out the facts. I suggest that one or two such persons should be chosen and they should be requested to inquire into selected instances of governmental 'atrocities' such as the two instances Mr. Jinnah has mentioned, Tanda and Bhadri. The charge is against the government and they should consider each instance from this point of view, as to whether the government has been guilty of any atrocities or even improper behaviour in regard to it. They should examine all relevant reports and papers, including official papers, as well as such evidence as the Pirpur committee has collected. Further they might make such additional inquiries as they might consider necessary. The inquiry should be limited to specific instances and specific charges, as otherwise it will become a vague, roving inquiry which will produce no helpful results. Later, if necessary, other instances can be inquired into. What I have suggested is a simple feasible course which can be adopted without delay or difficulty. I am making this suggestion on my own behalf without reference to any member of the U.P. Government, but I am sure that the Prime Minister and his colleagues will agree to it.

2. Issued on 5 January 1939.

### 34. To G. B. Pant<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad

January 16, 1939

My dear Pantji,

I do not know what steps you are taking in regard to Jinnah's challenge to you in his last statement.<sup>2</sup> I suppose you were waiting for his response to my offer. That response has not come yet. I realized when I made the offer that there were some difficulties in the way. But I saw no other way out. We discussed this subject at length at Bardoli. I can only write to you briefly now.

It is obviously necessary for our governments concerned to issue some kind of a reply to the various definite charges made in the Muslim League report. The government need not deal with the objections to the flag or to the *Bande Mataram*. But in regard to specific charges made a reply should be forthcoming. A copy of this reply should be sent to Maulana Azad. The parliamentary sub-committee will probably issue its own reply on the greater questions later. It may be that on our own initiative we might ask some impartial person to examine these charges and report. A person who was suggested for this purpose was Justice Devadoss of Madras who is a Christian. There are one or two other high court judges also probably available.

In regard to the flag and the *Bande Mataram*, the Working Committee was of opinion that we should avoid making this a matter of controversy as far as possible, and private instructions to this effect will probably be sent to you by Kripalani.

He will also write to you regarding cow-slaughter and music before mosques. We decided not to issue any public statement in this matter just on the eve of *Bakr-Id*. But our general view was contained in Gandhiji's original draft. This view was that generally speaking the legal right to cow-slaughter as well as to music and processions before mosques should be recognized and given effect to unless there was definite custom to the contrary. This is slightly different from the prevailing practice, the burden of proof being cast on those who want to stop the legal right. We felt however that the better procedure would

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. In his statement of 5 January 1939, Jinnah had challenged G.B. Pant's contention that the Mussalmans in U.P. were treated not only justly but generously and asked him to mention the instances of generous treatment of the Mussalmans in U.P.



be for us to inform governments of this general policy and leave it to them to give effect to it in such manner as they thought fit. It was thought that the best course would be for the Prime Minister to have an informal conference with representatives of different groups in the assembly and discuss the approaching *Bakr-Id*. This can easily be done without any fuss as assemblies are sitting and the *Bakr-Id* is near. If, as a result of this informal talk, the government made some announcement of a policy or issued instructions to its officers, it would be better than if a one-sided announcement was made. In a one-sided announcement that part which favoured one party would be accepted while the other part would be rejected. I trust therefore that it will be possible for you to have some such informal consultation with some leaders of the Muslim League and others.

I am writing this in some haste as I am leaving for Almora presently. But I think that I have given you some idea of what our discussions at Bardoli were.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

### 35. To Abul Kalam Azad<sup>1</sup>

Almora  
January 22, 1939

My dear Maulana,

I have just learnt that the radio has announced your withdrawal from the contest for the Congress presidentship.<sup>2</sup> I am sorry. But I may not criticise your action as you are the best person to judge of it.

I am glad to find from the newspapers that the Jaunpur bye-election matter has been satisfactorily settled.<sup>3</sup> I was very worried over this and I must confess that I disliked the idea of the Muslim League getting

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. Explaining his reasons for withdrawal from the contest, Abul Kalam Azad said: "I am unable to endure the additional strain of work and responsibility of the Congress presidentship".

3. The Congress nominee Ali Zaheer was declared elected unopposed to the U.P. Assembly from the Jaunpur-Allahabad Muslim constituency in the bye-election as the Muslim League withdrew its candidate in favour of Ali Zaheer.

their man in, unopposed. I felt that this would have been a very bad precedent. As it happens, the Congress position in Jaunpur was so strong that the first Muslim League candidate withdrew and a second had to be put in. Even then the League feared failure. I am very glad that the Congress agreed to Ali Zaheer's name and thus avoided the bitterness of conflict, and yet got a decent man in.

I am going down to Lucknow on the 27th.

Yours affectionately,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

### 36. To Abdul Latif<sup>1</sup>

Almora  
22.1.1939

My dear Latif,

Your letter. I am sorry to learn that few Muslims have been elected as delegates.<sup>2</sup> This year the competition was very great and many of our prominent Congressmen have been defeated as village people want to elect one of their own members and not a city dweller. If necessary some method by reservation must be devised.

About Hindi and Urdu, we must realise that two definite literary ways of expression have gained currency and it is not easy to change these suddenly. We must go on trying and meanwhile we need not be too critical of words used, whether they are Persian or Sanskrit. What is important is the structure of the language which must be the same. Unfortunately most of us do not know and are far too ignorant of Sanskrit or Persian words which go to enrich the language. Gradually we must build up a rich common vocabulary. It is certainly desirable to lay stress on simple language all the time.

I hope to meet you at Lucknow.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. Abdul Latif, *Latif Ki Kahani*, (Meerut, 1969), between pp. 184 and 185.

2. To the Tripuri Congress session.



### 37. To Mohamed Azizur Rahman<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
February 25, 1939

Dear Sir,

I thank you for your sending me a copy of your pamphlet *Our Findings*. A short while back, I read in the papers a statement made by Dr. Syed Mahmud, the Minister of Education in Bihar, regarding the national flag and the *Bande Mataram*.<sup>3</sup> That statement seemed to me an eminently reasonable and sensible one.

It seems to me that those who object to either the *Bande Mataram* or the national flag have not considered the question properly and have attached a totally wrong meaning to them. The national flag has absolutely nothing communal and for a generation now has been used in the remotest villages in India without any complaint except on the part of the British Government. The objections to it are of very recent growth and I have completely failed to understand them. Nothing in India represents the national movement so vividly to scores of millions of people more than the national flag which has always been considered a symbol of unity for all the communities in India. Obviously, India must have a national flag. If there was no such flag we would have to invent one. For it is patently wrong to use any communal flag when different communities are represented. You will find this national flag wherever Indians—Hindus, Muslims or others—live in any part of the world. They are proud of it everywhere. I have seen it in the remotest corners of Asia and Europe. It has become very dear to hundreds of millions of our people as a symbol of their freedom. It is a pity, therefore, that anyone should object to it and thus put up a barrier between himself and the sentiments of vast numbers of his countrymen.

As regards the *Bande Mataram*, this has been an integral part of our movement since before the present generation was born. It is quite understandable for some people to approve of it and others not to like

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. Secretary, Bihar Muslim Students Federation.

3. In reply to an adjournment motion in the Bihar Assembly, Syed Mahmud stated on 6 February 1939: "In the government's opinion there is nothing objectionable in the first two stanzas of the song and the government has issued instructions that the singing of even those stanzas should not be made obligatory and those who do not like the song should refrain from it. It is in deference to the Muslim opposition that these restrictions are imposed."

it as a song. But to object to an inoffensive song seems to me uncalled for.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

### 38. To Nemi Saran Jain<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
May 30, 1939

My dear Nemi Saran,<sup>2</sup>

Your letter of the 25th.<sup>3</sup> I appreciate your writing to me on this subject. Perhaps you have read some recent articles of mine which have appeared in the *National Herald*. If so, you must have noticed that I have been sufficiently troubled about many things in India. I have only given a small glimpse into my mind. I could have said much more.

You have referred to one particular aspect which has troubled you greatly. As a matter of fact that is generally speaking only one aspect, although an important one. The trouble is deep-seated and world-wide. In India we are witnessing a rapid disintegration. This in itself is a world phenomenon. Inevitably we must pass through this stage and I do not know when this period will end.

Coming to the particular point that you have raised, while I agree with you in much that you say, I think that you have laid undue emphasis on it. I do not think that the general Congress policy regarding

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. (b. 1899); a Congressman of Bijnor; member, U.P. Council, 1923-30; member, Lok Sabha, 1952-57.

3. In his letter of 25 May 1939, Nemi Saran Jain argued that the Congress attitude towards communal problems was wrong. He held that the Congress ministries were afraid of the Muslims and the just rights of the Hindus were being sacrificed with impunity. The 'Ahrars' with their communal flags were recognised and encouraged by the Congress. While the Hindu Congressmen were not allowed to participate in any agitation against the unreasonable attitude of the Muslims, the Muslims were permitted to take part in *Tabarra* and *Mad-he-Sahaba* agitations. The public service commission was asked by the Congress Muslim ministers to advertise for Muslims only for particular jobs. A recent publication of the government suggested that its policy was to bow to the communal prejudices of the Muslims.



the communal question has been very wrong or at all undignified, though there have been some minor lapses. I do think, however, that our ministry has erred on many occasions and has shown weakness in dealing with particular situations. But we must recognise that the situation has been a terribly difficult one. I do not think it is correct to say that the Hindus live in dread of the Muslims. It is perhaps so in some local areas, especially in cities. As a matter of fact, the fundamental fact of the situation is the fear of the Muslims of the Hindu majority. Latterly this has grown even greater.

The Ahrars are certainly no allies of the Congress and we have kept them at arm's length. It may be that in some local places there have been approaches to them.

Generally speaking our attitude to the *Mad-he-Sahaba* and *Tabarra* agitations has been on a par with our attitude regarding the Arya Samajists in Hyderabad.<sup>4</sup> That is to say, we have not interfered with individual liberty of Congressmen to take part in what they consider a religious matter. In fact, many of us have expressed our sympathy with the objects underlying the Hyderabad agitation. It is true that Maulana Husain Ahmad took an aggressive part which was from the Congress point of view not proper. In view, however, of the fact that the *Mad-he-Sahaba* and *Tabarra* agitations are continuing, it is very difficult for us to take any step in the nature of disciplinary action. So far as Ali Zaheer is concerned he is hardly a Congressman and certainly he does not belong to any committee.

I do not know anything about the advertisements for government services that you refer to. It certainly seems to me improper for advertisements to ask for Muslims only to apply.

The publication you refer to was certainly a folly on the part of the publicity department.

If you will look at our problems a little more deeply, you will find matters of far greater concern even than those you have mentioned, both inside and outside the Congress. Our problems tend to overwhelm us as other problems are overwhelming the world. We shall survive them of course and we cannot give in to them. Unfortunately our provincial governments are thoroughly tired out and stale through too much of work and responsibility. I want to go into this matter carefully and have done so to some extent. But the continuation of the *Tabarra* agitation has come in the way. I cannot divest myself, however, of responsibility in the matter, nor can you or anyone else amongst us.

4. The Arya Samaj started satyagraha in Hyderabad state early in 1939 for the vindication of religious freedom and suspended it in July 1939.

I am going to Bombay soon. On my return we shall again face our problems and try to deal with them properly.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru



## NATIONAL PLANNING





## 1. To Anil Kumar Chanda<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
December 1, 1938

My dear Anil,

Your letter.<sup>2</sup> I have written to Gurudeva separately. So far as the planning committee is concerned I shall associate myself with it because I am intensely interested in planning.<sup>3</sup> But all this kind of work requires a certain background, a certain atmosphere and a certain human material. I fear that much of this is lacking here. Still it is a good thing to begin thinking on right lines and make others do so.

Gurudeva seems to attach more importance than is warranted to the office of the Congress President. No major policy has been determined by the Congress President for some time past. It was because of this that I felt unhappy as President and I came to the conclusion that I would be far more useful without office. The real problems have to be determined quite apart from the presidentship of the Congress.

I hope to visit Santiniketan sometime in the second half of December. Indira is going to Almora soon.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. On 28 November 1938, he wrote that many at Santiniketan thought that "there are only two modernists in the High Command—you and Subhas Babu", and that Tagore eagerly wanted to see Subhas Bose "elected as President".
3. Subhas Bose, as President of the Congress, set up, in October 1938, the National Planning Committee with Jawaharlal as its chairman.

## 2. On Industrialisation<sup>1</sup>

I would like to stress the need for the committee to bear in mind that no conflict should arise between village and cottage industries and bigger industries. I would also urge the committee to suggest ways for the

1. Speech at the first meeting of the All India National Planning Committee, Bombay, 17 December 1938. From *National Herald*, 18 December 1938.

coordination of these two kinds of industries. It is also essential that we include a representative of labour in the planning committee.

I also consider it very necessary that the planning committee keeps itself in touch with the national movement. The national movement has affected the lives of the people of the country in many respects. It has also affected the cottage industry which has been the special plank of the national movement. If the activities of the committee or commission<sup>2</sup> in future would have no relation to the national movement then it is likely to be a tame affair because it is not possible to do anything which is super-imposed by a mere resolution. It must have a certain reality, intellectual, objective and psychological. The committee, therefore, should keep in mind that it is essential to keep in touch with the national movement in the country. Otherwise, it would lose itself in the backwaters, and simply discuss individual and isolated bits of industrialisation without the background of nationalism. The problem is indeed a difficult one but it must be faced.

I would also lay stress on the need for the committee to take care that no conflict between cottage industries and large-scale industries takes place.

2. The conference of the ministers of industries had proposed the appointment of an all-India national planning commission consisting of representatives of the British Indian provinces and the Indian states for giving effect to the recommendations of the planning committee.

### 3. Congress Policy on Large-Scale Industries<sup>1</sup>

The resolutions passed at the conference of ministers in October 1938, in pursuance of which this planning committee is being held, definitely approve of large-scale industries. They indicate that a planning scheme which should include the development of heavy key industries, medium-scale industries and cottage industries, should be drawn up.

1. Note written on 21 December 1938. *The Report of the National Planning Committee*, (Bombay), pp. 35-37.



A question is raised, however, as to whether it is open to the planning committee to consider the establishment or encouragement of large-scale industries, except such as may be considered key industries, in view of the general Congress policy in regard to industry. This Congress policy, as is well known, shows a strong bias towards the development of cottage industries, specially of hand-spinning and hand-weaving. It follows that the Congress would disapprove of any policy which came in the way of its development of cottage industries. But there appears to be nothing in the Congress resolutions against the starting or encouragement of large-scale industries, provided this does not conflict with the natural development of village industries.

Since 1920, the Congress has laid stress on hand-spinning and hand-weaving and that emphasis continues. In May 1929, the All India Congress Committee passed a resolution to the effect that "in order to remove the poverty and misery of the Indian people and to ameliorate the condition of the masses, it is essential to make revolutionary changes in the present economic and social structure of society and to remove the gross inequalities." This resolution indicates an approval of socialistic theories, but apart from this general approval and some further advances in subsequent resolutions, the Congress has not in any way accepted socialism.

In March 1931, the Karachi Congress passed an important resolution on fundamental rights and economic programme. This resolution contained the following clause:

The State shall own or control key industries and services, mineral resources, railways, waterways, shipping and other means of public transport.

This was stated with reference to the future Swaraj government which the Congress envisaged.

In July 1934, the Working Committee passed a resolution at Benares in which stress was laid on Congressmen using only hand-spun and hand-woven khadi to the exclusion of any other cloth. Further, it was stated that the "activities of Congress organisations relating to Swadeshi shall be restricted to useful articles manufactured in India through cottage and other similar industries." It was further stated in this resolution that "large and organised industries are in no need of the services of Congress organisations or of any Congress effort on their behalf."

Three months later at the Bombay Congress the All India Village Industries Association was formed. It is clear that the Congress considered it unnecessary to push large-scale industries through its organisation and left this to the state as well as to their own resources. It did not decide in any way against such large-scale industry.

Now that the Congress is, to some extent, identifying itself with the state, it cannot ignore the question of establishing and encouraging large-scale industries. Every provincial government has to face this issue and it was because of this that the Working Committee, as early as August 1937, recommended to the Congress ministries the appointment of expert committees for purposes of national reconstruction and social planning. The Working Committee evidently had in mind large-scale state planning which included big industry as well as cottage industry.

As no action was taken by the Congress ministries on this resolution for nearly a year, a second resolution was passed by the Working Committee in July 1938, authorising the President to convene a conference of the ministers of industries. It was as the result of this resolution that the Delhi conference was held, and the resolution under which this planning committee is functioning was passed.

It is clear therefore that not only is it open to this committee and to the planning commission to consider the whole question of large-scale industries in India in all its aspects but that the committee will be failing in its duty if it did not do so. There can be no planning if such planning does not include the big industries. But in making our plans we have to remember the basic Congress policy of encouraging cottage industries.

#### 4. To V.V. Giri<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad

January 16, 1939

My dear Giri,

In view of the conference of the ministers of industries to be held in Bombay towards the end of this month, one fact I think should be borne in mind by our ministers. The Government of India is likely to put forward various schemes. Their attempt will be to take the wind out of the sails of the planning committee. I think the proper course for us should be to examine such schemes as the Government of India put forward and draw their attention to the national planning that we have undertaken. Their schemes should fit in with the general planning

1. A.I.C.C. File No. P.L. 3(i)/1937, p. 225, N.M.M.L.



scheme in so far as this can be done. Therefore it will be desirable for their schemes to be referred to the national committee. In any event, no scheme should be finally agreed to at this stage without further consideration by the planning committee. I hope that when you go to Bombay you will have a consultation with the other ministers of industries and put this viewpoint before them.

While in Bombay I had a talk about the office work there. This is still in the early stages. I think it should be pushed and the secretary be given definite lines of enquiry which he could pursue. He must not simply issue circulars.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

## 5. To V.V. Giri<sup>1</sup>

Almora  
January 27, 1939

My dear Giri,

Your letter of the 20th. I am sorry the Frontier Government refuses to pay. I think they should pay something at least to show their formal association. If you like you can suggest this to them, or in any event we shall probably meet the Frontier people at the Congress time and can discuss it with them.

In regard to the states, their sizes and capacity vary so much that it is difficult to have one round figure for all. But in regard to the major states I think Rs. 500/- would be suitable. The smaller states might be considered separately when occasion arises.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. V.V. Giri Papers, National Planning Committee File, 1939.

## 6. National Planning and Industrialisation<sup>1</sup>

Industrialisation is essential to the progress of the country, but national planning does not mean industrialisation alone. On the other hand, it embraces the entire national life. There is yet another aspect of the problem. The opening of new factories would not usher in the millennium till the purchasing capacity of the masses, which is very low at the moment, is appreciably raised. That brings us face to face with the problems of currency, exchange and prices.

The National Planning Committee has issued a questionnaire<sup>2</sup> which is by no means complete. You should study it in order to understand the implications of national planning. There are manifold difficulties that are likely to frustrate any attempt at national planning. Some time back the vested interests in London thwarted the proposal for slum clearance. National planning is not possible till we have the power to deal effectively with the vested interests.

Science is a great force in the present age. You should imbibe the spirit of science and think on scientific lines. The impartial spirit of science has to be brought to bear on all the details that confront us in our daily avocations. We must insist on cultivation of a spirit of efficiency in everything that we are called upon to undertake. Those who neglect their ordinary tasks are slovenly in everyday work and never do anything big in life.

1. Speech at Delhi University, 14 February 1939. From *The Hindustan Times*, 15 February 1939.
2. A questionnaire for collecting data relating to industry and commerce and for drawing up schemes for location of industries was sent to provincial governments, universities, trade unions and other public bodies.



7. To K.T. Shah<sup>1</sup>

Lucknow  
May 13, 1939

My dear Shah,

I must apologise to you. I have been protesting that I did not receive the draft plan that you sent me. This was true. Nevertheless the draft did come. It got mixed up with old newspapers and was only discovered by chance a long time afterwards. I am sorry.

I have now looked through it. It seems very comprehensive. It is difficult to criticise it without going into details. I suppose some such thing is necessary for us as a basis for consideration. But I am rather afraid of our getting lost in too many details. Perhaps something shorter and more general will be easier to consider during the earlier stages. But I have no doubt that a fuller plan as you suggest would be extraordinarily helpful in putting the full picture before us.

I suppose that we shall have to determine at an early stage what our general objective and policy are going to be. Real planning, I take it, is hardly possible under the ordinary capitalist structure of society where so many vested interests intervene. Some measure of planning might be done in a fascist state. But planning, as most of us conceive it, is inevitably connected with a socialist society.

Obviously, constituted as we are, and constituted as the planning committee is, we can hardly begin tackling the question on a socialist basis. We have to accept to a large extent the present structure, at any rate, as a jumping-off ground. At the same time, we must aim at something different, though that need not be, so far as the committee is concerned, full-blooded socialism. Even according to the present Congress policy it is our objective to nationalise key industries and key services and banking, etc. That is something definite to go upon. You might refer in this connection to the Karachi resolution of the Congress on fundamental rights, etc.<sup>2</sup> Further, we should try to aim at, as far as possible, producing for consumption rather than for profit. In any event, the profit motive should be subordinated to the social motive. How far this is possible under present circumstances, it is difficult to say. Perhaps it is not possible. If so, inevitably we have to consider the changes necessary to make it possible. If we start with the dictum

1. J.N. Papers, National Planning Committee File No. 135 (Pt. II)/1939, pp. 31-32, N.M.M.L.

2. See *Selected Works*, Vol. 4, pp. 511-513.

that only under socialism there can be planning, we frighten people and irritate the ignorant. If, on the other hand, we think in terms of planning apart from socialism and thus inevitably arrive at some form of socialism, that is a logical process which will convert many who are weary of words and slogans.

I imagine that our approach should be something on these lines without challenging the existing structure. At the same time, it would be folly to strengthen the vested interests in the existing structure. We should do nothing to create fresh barriers in the way of the change-over.

Could we then concentrate on a few major items of policy which should guide us in our planning and which are not obviously in conflict with the basic structure today, though they change it considerably?

I feel that in India today any attempt to push out the middle class is likely to end in failure. The middle class is too strong to be pushed out and there is a tremendous lack of human material in any other class to take its place effectively, or to run a planned society, for even in most countries in Europe where conditions apparently are much more favourable, such an attempt has not succeeded and has given place to reaction. Here, in India, a premature conflict on class lines would lead to a break-up and possibly to prolonged inability to build anything. The disruptive forces in the country seem to be growing in strength and it almost seems that we are going the way of China.

These are some odd thoughts which are not directly connected with planning.

I have been tied up here in Lucknow because of the Shia-Sunni controversy. It seems rather absurd for us to talk in big terms when we have to face such absurd conflicts which remind one of mediaeval times.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru



## 8. To H. Trivedi<sup>1</sup>

Lucknow  
May 13, 1939

Dear Trivedi,<sup>2</sup>

... I have no intention of making a speech at the next meeting, nor do I intend encouraging others to make speeches. I hope the committee will function more as a body of experts or as a board of directors in as businesslike a way as possible. But I would welcome a note from Dr. Saha<sup>3</sup> as to his general idea as to what the planning committee should do.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. National Planning Committee File No. 135 (Pt. IV)/1939, p. 28, N.M.M.L. Extracts.
2. (b. 1909); scientist; member, National Planning Committee, 1937-39; industrial adviser, U.P. Government, 1962-64.
3. Meghnad Saha (1893-1956); eminent astro-physicist and Fellow of the Royal Society; founder, Institute of Nuclear Physics, Calcutta; member, Lok Sabha, 1952-56.

## 9. The Need for Planning for Free India<sup>1</sup>

The first meeting of the National Planning Committee took place five and a half months ago in December last. A questionnaire was drafted at this meeting and this was sent to various governments, universities, public bodies, chambers of commerce, trade unions, firms and individuals. It was hoped that the next meeting of the committee might take place by the end of March but repeated requests were made by those to whom the questionnaire was issued for an extension of time. These requests were not unreasonable as the questionnaire was a difficult and exhaustive one and required considerable labour if satisfactory answers

1. Note circulated to the members of the National Planning Committee, Allahabad, 4 June 1939. *The Report of the National Planning Committee*, (Bombay, 1949), pp. 38-43.

were to be given. An extension of time was therefore granted and this has led to a delay in holding our second session. I trust the committee will excuse this delay.

In the resolution<sup>2</sup> of the conference of the ministers of industries by which this committee was appointed, it was laid down that the committee was to submit its report to the Congress Working Committee and to the all-India national planning commission within four months of the commencement of its sitting. That period is already over and we are far from the report stage as yet. We have now received a considerable number of answers to our questionnaire and we have to consider them. We may have to appoint a number of sub-committees.<sup>3</sup> I do not think that at this stage these sub-committees will be required to make very detailed investigations and they should submit their reports within a reasonably short time.

I should like the preliminary report of the planning committee to be ready for presentation to the Congress Working Committee by October next at the latest. This report will of course not embody the full planning scheme in all its details. For this further investigations will be necessary. This might be undertaken by this committee or by the planning commission which it is proposed to set up. In any event, it becomes necessary to request the Congress Working Committee to grant us an extension of time, and I would suggest that the 31st October 1939 would be a suitable time-limit.

We have been asked to draw up a national plan for India, or, at any rate, to indicate the general nature of such a plan, the details of which can be filled in from time to time. Before we formulate such a plan of national development, which is likely to cover all branches of material and cultural life of the country, we must be clear in our minds about our objective and the basic considerations which should govern such a plan. It is clear that the drawing up of a comprehensive national plan becomes merely an academic exercise, with no relation to reality, unless the planning authority, or those to whom it is responsible, are in a position to give effect to that plan. If this authority is powerless or is circumscribed and restricted and its activities limited, it cannot plan.

It follows, therefore, that the national authority which plans must also have full power to give effect to its planning. An essential prerequisite

2. It resolved that problems of poverty, unemployment, national defence and economic regeneration in general could not be solved without industrialisation and as a step towards such industrialisation a comprehensive scheme of national planning should be formulated.
3. Twenty nine sub-committees were appointed and the planning committee's work extended until March 1940.



for planning is thus complete freedom and independence for the country and the removal of outside control. This implies that the country possesses in itself full sovereign authority to take any measures, adopt any policies, and form any relations with other countries as may seem best to its governing authority in the interests of the country and its people.

It is possible that in the event of the formation of a world union of free and equal nations, this sovereign authority might be voluntarily limited to some extent by each component unit in the interests of world planning and cooperation. But such a development would not come in the way of national planning. If it takes place on right lines, it might even help the planning within a nation. In any event, we need not take this, for the present, remote possibility into consideration.

National independence is thus an indispensable preliminary for taking all the steps that might be found necessary for carrying out the plan in all its various aspects. It is not even possible to draw up a plan on any other basis. At the present moment, it is clear that not only have we in India no national independence but we are hedged in and obstructed by numerous restrictions, limitations, safeguards and reservations which block our path to planning and progress.

Our plan for national development must, therefore, be drawn up for a free and independent India. This does not mean that we must wait for independence before doing anything towards the development of planned economy. Even under existing conditions we must make every effort to adopt all measures and policies which develop the resources of the country and raise the standard of our people. All such efforts, however, must be directed towards the realisation of the plan we have drawn up for a free India. They should neutralise, as far as possible, the force of the existing restrictions on our constitutional powers, and should not create new vested interests, or further erroneous policies, which might form new obstacles in the achievement of our goal and realisation of our full plan.

We have thus to draw up a full plan which would apply to a free India and at the same time indicate what should be done now, and under present conditions, in the various departments of national activity.

The ideal of the Congress is the establishment of a free and democratic state in India. Such a full democratic state involves an egalitarian society, in which equal opportunities are provided for every member for self-expression and self-fulfilment, and an adequate minimum of a civilised standard of life is assured to each member so as to make the

attainment of this equal opportunity a reality. This should be the background or foundation of our plan.

The Congress has, in view of the present conditions in India, laid great stress on the encouragement of cottage industries in India. Any planning must therefore take note of this fact and base itself on it. This does not necessarily mean a conflict between cottage industries and large-scale industries. A large number of essential industries, which are necessary for the independence and well-being of the country, must inevitably be on a large scale. The very resolution appointing the planning committee calls upon us to provide for the development of heavy key industries, medium-scale industries and cottage industries. It lays down that the economic regeneration of the country cannot take place without industrialisation. We have thus to expedite this industrialisation and to indicate how and where key and basic industries are to be started. We have to demarcate, in so far as possible, the domains of large-scale and cottage industries, and where the latter have been especially fostered by the national movement, to give them every protection and encouragement.

The Congress has laid down in its Karachi resolution on fundamental rights that the state shall own or control key industries and services, mineral resources, railways, waterways, shipping and other means of public transport. The general indication of Congress policy is of vital importance and applies not only to public utilities but to large-scale industries and enterprises which are likely to be monopolistic in character. A legitimate extension of this principle would be to apply it to all large-scale enterprises. It is clear that our plan must proceed on this basis and even if the state does not own such enterprises, it must regulate and control them in the public interest.

It may be impracticable to insist on state management of the existing industries in which vested interests have already taken root. But wherever even an established industry, under private control, receives aid or protection from the state or tends to develop into a monopoly or comes into conflict with the general policy of the state in regard to workers or consumers, the state should take necessary steps to assure conformity in all such ventures with its basic policy and with the objective laid down in the plan.

The Karachi Congress resolution on fundamental rights further laid down that:

- (a) The organisation of economic life must conform to the principle of justice, to the end that it may secure a decent standard of living.
- (b) The state shall safeguard the interests of industrial workers and shall secure for them, by suitable legislation and in other ways, a living wage, healthy conditions of work, limited hours of labour,



suitable machinery for the settlement of disputes between employers and workmen, and protection against the economic consequences of old age, sickness and unemployment.

The resolution appointing this committee does not mention agriculture as such but it is impossible to conceive of any scheme of national planning in any country, and least of all in India, which does not include agriculture. Agriculture is and will remain the largest single industry of this country, and it is associated with a host of subsidiary industries. Any improvement or variation in agriculture has far-reaching results in the economy of the nation. Cottage industries are intimately connected with it, more especially as providing suitable occupations for the spare time of the agriculturists. Agriculture must, therefore, inevitably be considered by this committee in its scheme of national planning.

I suggest that some of the points noted above, and others of a like nature, might be considered by the committee before we proceed to a detailed examination of the answers to our questionnaire and other problems. This will enable us to lay down our general policy and indicate our method of approach to the problem. It will also prevent a repetition of arguments on the same subject. We have to remember that the plan must be a comprehensive programme of national development, each part fitting into the other. It has to be viewed in this perspective and drawn up as such.

Prof. K.T. Shah has, at my request, very kindly prepared a rough sketch of a draft plan. I requested him to do so as I felt that some such draft would help us to view the subject as a whole and to consider its various aspects. This draft has been circulated to the members.

After we have discussed and laid down these points of basic policy, and examined briefly the replies to the questionnaire, we might proceed to the appointment of sub-committees. These sub-committees would then be guided by this policy as well as by such further terms of reference as we might lay down. I think it is important that the sub-committees should meet soon and report as early as possible. We cannot afford to lengthen our work. It is possible that some of the sub-committees might even report before our present session ends. We have asked the members of the committee to come prepared to stay here for a fortnight.

We shall have to reorganise our whole office and make further arrangements about our finances. Work has grown and will grow rapidly and our present staff is unable to cope with it. I suggest that we appoint a sub-committee to go into this matter and report to us within a few days.

Our finances are at present low and the provincial governments and states, who are cooperating with us, should be requested to send further

and substantial contributions. The work this committee is doing is essentially their work and they should not grudge us help. On our part we must organise our work as economically as possible. Although we are supported by various provincial governments and states we need not and indeed we cannot afford to fall into the bad habits of official committees and commissions, which are notorious for spending on themselves large sums of public money. We should rather try to observe the standards laid down by the Congress for its committees.

## 10. Planning—A Continuous Process<sup>1</sup>

I am very grateful to you, and I may say on behalf of the members of the planning committee, for inviting us to this function and for your kind words. I hope that behind these generous words there is no intention on your part to drive me to say as to what is happening in the planning committee.<sup>2</sup> Some time back, I think on the first or the second day of this present session, we passed a resolution to the effect that no member of the planning committee should say anything in public which might commit the planning committee. So you will see that if I speak anything about planning it would be on behalf of the committee and so I have to be exceedingly careful about what I say. But I think that I and almost all the members of the planning committee will greatly, if not wholly, agree with the remarks which you have made just now.

It is now obvious that in India we must get going very fast as our colleague Sir M. Visvesvaraya has said. It is most encouraging to see a person like him, more or less on the eve of his retirement, so full of vitality and courage, desirous of giving a push to India. So it is obvious we must go on. On the other hand, it is also obvious that one should not go on by merely picking up any one way. One has to find out the

1. Speech at the reception given by the Chamber of Indian Merchants, Bombay, 15 June 1939. From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 19 June 1939.

2. The president of the Chamber of Indian Merchants in his welcome address had hoped that nothing would be done to check industrial enterprise.



way by which one has to get through and to determine the best methods of getting through, and therefore one has to plan. There are various methods of planning and various objectives and, very likely, the members of the planning committee do not hold one objective and one method.

But I want to tell you my own experience during the last two weeks or so that we have met this time and also the experience of those few days when we met last. In our discussions we found that sometimes in spite of vital differences—differences in our outlook—there was a tremendous amount of agreement and how that agreement was far greater than the difference in outlook. It is inevitable, of course, that at later stages of development in India, those differences in outlook will play an important part. But I hope that even at that time we will be wise enough to find a large measure of agreement. However, for the present, it is very gratifying to find, though many of us have worked in entirely different spheres and with different outlooks, that we do have a tremendous amount of agreement.

One point I would like to mention is this. It is sometimes asked what this planning committee has done during the last six months. All that we did in December was to issue a questionnaire. All that we have done now is to consider briefly some of the answers to the questionnaire and to decide a few other points, viz., the general line of action and the type of planning, etc. A large number of sub-committees have been appointed for investigation. We must give some time to those sub-committees to submit their reports because it is not an easy work for them, and most of the members of those sub-committees are not wholly unemployed; they are busy men and it would take time for their reports to come. When their reports come, we have to consider them afresh and then arrive at some conclusion. It is possible of course that all this might be hastened a little, but I think it is unreasonable to expect a committee of this type to produce a ready-made scheme in the course of a few weeks or a few months. It is really a vast problem.

I do not know how many of you have really thought about it because those people, who put the question as to why anything has not been done so far, lack understanding of the real problem. Planning is not merely a question to decide what industry is required here or what industry is required there. The question embraces almost every possible economic aspect and not only that but many other activities in India and ultimately every aspect of national life. Now that we have the planning committee we have to devise a plan embracing all aspects of national life, i.e., economic, political, social, cultural and spiritual. All these aspects will have to be looked into. To attempt all this may be somewhat beyond us because we have not even got the requisite data for

studying these various aspects of the question. But the point is that planning does involve some consideration of all these aspects, i.e., entering into various details, investigation of all possible data, etc. We may find that development on one side may not fit in with the development on some other side.

We know that Russian planning in the economic sphere has been very successful but we also know that they have had tremendous setbacks too, because while they planned well one aspect of the problem, the other aspects they did not. They produced a lot but the transport sometimes failed. They could not carry the goods to other places. Some such things do happen. So you cannot think and plan about production only. If what you produce is not consumed, what would you do with your production? So you have to think in terms of consumption also. You cannot have mass production unless you have mass consumption. Having the capacity to produce, you have to think in terms of distribution also. You have to think in so many other terms. Again, if we investigate the whole problem in its entirety, it is so vast that we might rather get frightened.

You have also to take into consideration our present resources and the existing political situation and so on and so forth. Now the real planning of a comprehensive scheme obviously needs a deal of planning, years of investigation, planning, checking of data, enquiries and so on. We have not got the data today which most advanced countries possess. We have not got statistics even. Now if we wait for the receipt of all this information, we again do not do anything at all. But to think like this would be absurd. So we have, first of all, to collect the available data and tap various sources and then look at the picture of India. The picture will still not be complete as there will be many gaps in it. Yet, we have to see how to bring about the necessary improvement in the living conditions of our countrymen and for that purpose what should we do. So while undertaking some development work, we have to go on trying to collect further data, make further inquiries from governments and other bodies. Thus planning, in effect, becomes a continuous process, and all that the planning committee has got to do now is to collect details immediately, to draw up a model outline of the future scheme, and to put it before the country right now because we know we cannot back out. We must, as Sir M. Visvesvaraya has stated, start something immediately and not lose ourselves in academic conferences. Therefore both sides of the work have to be done simultaneously.

Obviously, the evolution of the planning scheme requires cooperation of all the members of the planning committee. Much more so does the next stage, that is, giving effect to the scheme which requires the



cooperation of the various elements inside the country. That is essential. All I can say is that we can succeed if this planning committee can put before the country some programme that enables it to start doing some work immediately. To visualise India as she would be ten years hence or five years hence, we shall have to set our hearts to planning and then, of course, we have another five or ten years to work upon and to go on and on. It will be terrible then to back out.

So we all shall have to work, and those who do not work, I hope there will be no room for them in India, and they will have to retire to some other place where they can enjoy themselves. We want to set the whole country to work, but we find that there are two types of unemployed people in this country. There are those who lack work and are starving and then there are also such unemployed persons who have too much to eat and therefore do not require any work. Neither of these two types of unemployment is desired in this country. We want all people to be employed and do some useful activity of producing wealth and sharing it with each other.

## 11. To G.B. Pant<sup>1</sup>

Bombay  
June 16, 1939

My dear Pantji,

Your letter of June 12th.<sup>2</sup> It is unfortunate that the U.P. Government delayed in sending their replies to the questionnaire of the planning committee. There is no doubt that the questionnaire was sent to your government in the early stages. We have as a matter of fact a receipt from one department but some other departments were unaware of this. This does not speak highly of the coordination of the various departments.

This planning committee is likely to do a very useful piece of work and lay the foundations of something big in future. In spite of the very mixed and conflicting elements in the committee, we are pulling on

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. He expressed his satisfaction with the work being done by the planning committee.

fairly satisfactorily. We hope to finish our present sessions in another two days. We are appointing about thirty sub-committees and these will include a number of government representatives. I hope the U.P. Government will spare these people for the sub-committees.

As we are planning to do the work on a fairly big scale, we have budgeted for an expenditure of Rs. 50,000/- during the next six months. We have to get this money entirely from provincial governments and states. Industrialists are prepared to supply funds but we do not want to take money from them. I think the U.P. Government should give at least Rs. 5,000/- more for this period. Hyderabad is giving Rs. 4,000/- and Bhopal is giving Rs. 1,500/-.

I am sorry the Shia-Sunni conflict is going on. It seems to me that something is very radically wrong with us in India, or perhaps with the entire world, at the present moment. It is as if the blood of a human being has been poisoned and every little boil refuses to heal. There are so many aspects of this wider question which I wanted to discuss with you, but the Shia-Sunni dispute took up all our time and I wanted this to be over before going on to general issues.

I shall stay on here till the A.I.C.C. meeting.

Yours affectionately,  
Jawaharlal

## 12. To V.V. Giri<sup>1</sup>

Bombay  
June 16, 1939

My dear Giri,

The planning committee is going on and is likely to end on Sunday. I have received a letter from Sir Chhotu Ram,<sup>2</sup> the Minister of Development in the Punjab Government, promising to cooperate fully in the future work of the planning committee. He complains that he was

1. V.V. Giri Papers, National Planning Committee File, 1939.
2. (1881-1949); founder-member, Unionist Party, and its leader in the Punjab Assembly, 1926-31; president, Punjab Assembly, 1936; Minister for Development and Revenue in the Punjab Government, 1937-45.



ignored in the early stages but in view of what I wrote to him he and his department will cooperate in future.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

### 13. Guide-lines for Planning<sup>1</sup>

The National Planning Committee has been entrusted with a task which is vast in its scope, vital in its significance, and intimately connected with the progress and future well-being of the people of this country. In order to have the fullest assistance and cooperation of others in this task, the committee has appointed a number of sub-committees consisting of eminent and distinguished experts in various fields of national activity. Planning is a much-used word in the world today; yet in India this is the first attempt to plan on a national basis and to coordinate the manifold activities of the nation. Many fundamental questions arise as to the nature of this planning, the objectives in view and the methods to be adopted. Final decisions on most of these questions will have to be taken at a later stage by the planning committee and the ultimate acceptance of those decisions and their application will lie with the representatives of the people. But there cannot even be an approach to planning without some clarification of the objectives and the methods to be employed.

2. The president of the planning committee, in a memorandum which he presented, drew the attention of the committee to some of the guiding principles and objectives which should govern national planning. A copy of this memorandum is attached to this note and the particular attention of all members of sub-committees is invited to it. This note has been prepared, in further amplification of the chairman's memorandum, for the guidance of sub-committees. It is of the essence of planning that there should be coordination between various activities, and it thus becomes necessary that the various sub-committees should have a common purpose governing their outlook and should cooperate together

1. Note written at Bombay on 19 June 1939 for the guidance of the sub-committees of the National Planning Committee. *National Herald*, 21 June 1939.

in building a national plan which is an organic whole, each part of it having its proper place and fitting in with the other parts.

3. What is planning? Democratic planning is the technical co-ordination, by disinterested experts, of consumption, production, investment, trade, and income distribution in accordance with social objectives set by bodies representative of the majority. Such planning is not only to be considered from the point of view of economics and the raising of the standard of living, but must include cultural and spiritual values and the human side of life.

4. Such a plan thus requires a social objective and the power and authority to give effect to the plan. If this power is limited in any way, or there are other restrictions, political or economic, which come in the way of the working out of the plan, no planned economy can develop. Real planning can only take place with full political and economic freedom, and a national plan must therefore be based on India having sovereign authority. At the same time, in view of the present circumstances prevailing in the country and the restrictions that have been imposed upon us, the plan must also indicate what is immediately feasible and what steps should be taken, even under existing conditions, to work towards the realisation of the plan and to secure the fullest possible utilisation of national resources for raising the standard of life. Such steps must be in keeping with the scheme of a planned economy, and in no event must anything be done which might come in the way of that plan.

5. There is a large measure of agreement about our social objectives and yet there are vital differences also. It is possible that many of these differences might be resolved as a result of this inquiry. To some extent these objectives have been indicated by the National Congress in a number of resolutions and by the general policy it has pursued. We must adhere to this general policy and keep these objectives in view. Reference has been made to these in the chairman's memorandum.

6. The Congress has laid stress for many years on the development of cottage industries and has sought to direct the attention of the country to the conditions of the villagers. We cannot forget the emphasis or forget the fact that all progress in India must be measured in terms of raising the standards of India's millions. An apparent conflict has arisen in the minds of some between the claims of cottage industry and large-scale industry. This conflict is largely one of emphasis. It is clear that in India today the development of cottage industries on a vast scale is essential for the well-being of the masses. It is equally clear that the rapid development of large-scale machine industry is an urgent need of the country. Without industrialisation no country can have



political or economic freedom, and even cottage industries cannot develop to any large extent if economic freedom is absent. Without industrialisation also the rapid and effective raising of the standards of the people is not possible. Key industries, defence industries, and public utilities must be developed on a large scale. Even the development of cottage industries is helped greatly by the supply of cheap power and suitable machinery for cottage use, which are obtainable from the working of large-scale enterprises. To some extent handicrafts and large-scale industrial enterprises are complementary to each other. The problem before the country therefore is one of coordinated growth in both directions and the avoidance, so far as is possible, of conflict between cottage industry and large-scale industry.

7. The emphasis of the Congress on cottage industries is chiefly due to its desire to have a more equitable system of distribution and to avoid the evils that have resulted from indiscriminate and uncontrolled industrialisation. Distribution is the vital corner-stone of any planned economy and the evils of industrialism can and should be avoided if there is an equitable system of distribution. In the national plan for India a proper scheme of distribution must therefore be considered as essential.

8. The resolution of the Delhi conference of ministers of industries, which led to the formation of the National Planning Committee, is a clear direction to the committee to hasten industrialisation, and calls for the development of heavy key industries, medium-scale industries and cottage industries. These are the terms of reference of this committee. It should be further remembered that the Congress has laid down in its resolution on fundamental rights that "the State shall own or control key industries and services, mineral resources, railways, waterways, shipping and other means of public transport."

9. The principal objective of planning the national economy should be to attain, as far as possible, national self-sufficiency, and not primarily for purposes of foreign markets. This does not exclude international trade, which should be encouraged, but with a view to avoid economic imperialism. The first charge on the country's produce, agricultural and industrial, should be to meet the domestic needs of food supply, raw materials and manufactured goods. But outlets for surplus goods may be explored to meet the requirements of India's international indebtedness.

10. The fundamental aim to be kept in view is to ensure an adequate standard of living for the Indian masses. An adequate standard of living implies a certain irreducible minimum plus a progressive scale of comforts and amenities.

Estimates of economists in different parts of India put down this irreducible minimum at figures varying from Rs. 15 to Rs. 25 per capita per month in the present value of the rupee. The expression in terms of money is only used for the sake of convenience, the real measure being in terms of goods and services. An approximate estimate puts the average annual income per capita at Rs. 65/-. This implies not only a considerable deficit in food supply but also in the other essential requirements of human existence. The national income must therefore be increased greatly during the next ten years to ensure an irreducible minimum standard. In order to secure this minimum standard for everybody, not only will it be necessary to increase production but also to bring about a more equitable distribution of wealth.

11. A really progressive standard of life will necessitate the increase of the national wealth five or six times. But for the present the minimum standard which can and should be reached is an increase of national wealth of between two or three times within the next ten years. It is with this object in view that we should plan now.

12. Planned advance has to be measured by certain objective tests from year to year. These may be laid down as follows:

- i) The improvement of nutrition from the standard of an irreducible minimum requirement of proteins, carbohydrates and minerals (as well as necessary protective foods) having a calorific value of 2400 to 2800 units for an adult worker.
- ii) The improvement of clothing from the present consumption of about 15 yards on an average to at least 30 yards per capita per annum.
- iii) Housing standards to reach at least 100 square feet per capita.

13. Viewed from another standpoint the following indices of progress should be borne in mind.

- |   |                          |
|---|--------------------------|
| i) Increase in agricultural production.   | To meet at least the     |
| ii) Increase in industrial production.  | requirements laid down   |
|   | in 12 (i) and (ii) above |
| iii) Diminution of unemployment.  |                          |
| iv) Increase in per capita income.  |                          |
| v) Liquidation of illiteracy.   |                          |
| vi) Provision of medical aid on the basis of one health unit for 1000 population. |                          |
| vii) Increase in the average expectation of life.                                 |                          |

Statistical data have to be collected and compared with a view to measure the progress of the plan from time to time. The development



of statistical work will be necessary to keep pace with the development of planning.

14. The different sectors of the plan have necessarily to be coordinated. The essence of planning is an advance on all fronts. There must be agricultural planning, the object being that the country should be self-sufficient as regards foodstuffs measured in terms of the food index given above, and the quantity of raw materials for industries raised by a pre-determined percentage. Soil conservation, afforestation, grass land management, flood control and river management, and improvement of inland navigation and transport are items in the planned programmes which have not yet been taken up systematically. Power development and the conservation and development of coal and other kinds of fuel for industrial power also demand planning. More important is the planning of different kinds and types of industries, large, medium and cottage, which alone may effectively mitigate the present pressure of population on the soil. Within a decade the aim should be to produce a balanced economic structure in which about half the population would depend on agriculture.

15. Reorganisation and control of the currency system are essential for agricultural recovery. Education, technical and developmental research also have to be included in a planned programme.

16. No planning can succeed if the rate of economic progress is out-run by the rate of increase in population. In the planned economy of India, emigration shall not be based on the deliberate policy of developing population so as to create a surplus to settle in other countries, but such surplus may be allowed to emigrate through agreements with other countries, with due regard to the rights of such settlers in those parts.

17. A ten-year limit for the accomplishment of the plan with control figures for different periods and different sectors of economic life should be laid down.

18. Defence industries should be owned and controlled by the state; public utilities should be owned or controlled by the state, but there is a strong body of opinion which is in favour of the state always owning public utilities. Other key industries should be owned or controlled by the state.

19. Other conditions, such as availability of raw materials and resources and ready access to large consuming centres, being equal, special attention should be devoted in the plan to the development of industrially backward regions. Labour legislation and codes, health, sickness and unemployment insurance, national housing and social welfare schemes will have to be coordinated with the plan. The provinces will initiate these, but the national planning commission should lay down

the policy regulating minimum standards of wages and the employment of labour.

20. Provinces vary in capital resources and in the capacity for industrial experimenting and pioneering. It will be desirable for them to work through the National Planning Committee with its appropriate adjuncts.

21. As regards ways and means for a planned economic development in general, the credit of the provincial and central governments should be fully utilised to raise the necessary finance, and the investment policy of the banking and insurance institutions of the country will have to be changed in order to further industrial planning.

22. A complete scheme of planned economy is a vast undertaking requiring full information and data and the willing cooperation of large numbers of persons for a period of years. It is a progressive scheme, being continually adjusted to changing conditions and always taking advantage of the experience gained in its working. The National Planning Committee is obviously not in a position to draw up such a complete scheme, nor does it intend to do so at this stage. What is intended now is to lay the foundations of a planned economy on which the future structure can be built. But even at this stage the full picture must be envisaged and a complete outline drawn up, which can be filled in later as opportunity comes and further materials are available. India is one of the very few countries in the world which has the resources within its own borders of building up a planned system.

23. The committee therefore proposes to proceed on the existing data, imperfect as it is, or on such material as can easily be obtained, and to draw up a broad outline picture. By the end of this year it is hoped to present a preliminary report which can be the basis for the next stage of planning. The sub-committees are requested to bear this in mind as the time factor is important. It is hoped that all sub-committees will send their reports to the National Planning Committee by the 31st October 1939.

24. A schematic outline of national planning is appended herewith.<sup>2</sup>

2. Not printed.



#### 14. The Programme of the National Planning Committee<sup>1</sup>

1. The National Planning Committee have just concluded their second series of meetings lasting two weeks. As the committee surveyed the full extent of the problem of national planning, the subjects they had to deal with grew in number, as each was interrelated to the other, and none could be wholly ignored if a full scheme of planning was to be drawn up. In order to investigate these separate subjects and branches of national activity more fully, and later to endeavour to coordinate them, a large number of sub-committees have been set-up. These sub-committees consist of experts and public men including representatives of provincial governments and the states.

2. The committee have had the advantage of receiving the full co-operation of most of the provincial governments and several important states. During the sessions just concluded, the ministers of industries of Bombay, Madras and Bihar, as well as special representatives from several provincial governments, attended and took part in the committee's deliberations. Representatives from the states of Hyderabad, Mysore, Baroda and Bhopal also participated and helped the committee with their advice. The Punjab Government sent answers to the committee's questionnaire and have promised their full cooperation in future. The Bengal Government have so far not sent an answer to the invitation sent to them seeking their cooperation, but it is hoped that they will agree to cooperate with the committee's work. It is hoped also that many more states will join in this work, notably Kashmir, Travancore, Cochin and Patiala, whose resources enable them to take an effective part in the development of their own and the national wealth. Travancore and Cochin have already promised their cooperation. In the drawing up of a national plan, it is important that the needs and capacities of all provinces and states should be considered in order to avoid a lopsided development which might be unfair to a province or a state. The presence of the representatives of all the provinces and of the principal states is thus necessary so that no interests are ignored or overlooked and a proper equilibrium is established.

1. Note sent to provincial and state governments, Bombay, 20 June 1939. B.G. Kher Papers, N.M.M.L.

3. The cooperation of the Government of India and their experts is also very necessary, both in order to obtain all the available information and data, as well as to have the benefit of their advice and suggestions.

4. The sub-committees appointed by the National Planning Committee contain the names of a considerable number of officials of the Government of India, the provincial governments and the states. These official members can only join the sub-committees with the permission of their respective governments. We hope that this permission will be readily given. We realise that high officials are busy men and cannot easily be spared for any length of time. It is not intended to take too much of their time and every attempt will be made to have the meetings of the sub-committees concerned at such place or time as to suit them. Even if they cannot always attend, their general guidance will be helpful.

5. Many provincial governments and states have recently had their own enquiries and have drawn up their own programmes or plans of development. All such as have done so are requested to send these plans to the office of the National Planning Committee in Bombay, so that the committee might try to fit these plans in, so far as is possible, with the general scheme. It is important that no provincial or state viewpoint is ignored. In the case of provinces and states where no such enquiry has so far taken place, we would suggest that steps might now be taken to have an inquiry and to collect materials and information for planning.

6. The National Planning Committee will gladly give all the assistance in their power to provinces or states who institute such enquiries. Where desired special investigators can be sent.

7. Many provincial governments and states have also recently passed or initiated legislation relating to land and agriculture, industries, social services, and like subjects. The committee will be grateful if all such legislation, whether proposed or already passed, is sent to them by the governments concerned.

8. It would greatly facilitate the work of both the National Planning Committee and the provincial governments and the states concerned, if each government appointed a special officer to keep in touch with the planning committee, to gather the information required for the purposes of planning, and to keep the committee informed of his government's viewpoint and activities. Such an officer would lighten the burden of the various government departments concerned and would save the time of the governments and the committee. It is not suggested



that he should leave his province or state except perhaps for an occasional visit. He should ordinarily remain at the headquarters of his government. The general secretary of the National Planning Committee or other representative could visit the headquarters of the province or state and confer with such officer and suggest to him the type of information required. This direct and personal contact would be of great help to all concerned and would enable us to avoid needless delay. Such a special officer need only be appointed for six months for the present.

9. The National Planning Committee have suggested to the Government of India and the provincial and state governments that the forthcoming census in 1941 might be utilised, in so far as possible, for the collection of additional information for the purpose of planning. A detailed recommendation to this effect will follow. This additional information will not be available for the use of the committee but it will be of the greatest use for the future development of planning to all governments concerned. The census operations offer an opportunity when this might be done without great additional expense. To endeavour to collect this information later separately will involve the setting up of a new organisation at vast expense. An attempt should also be made to follow international standards in the collection of information through the census and other means. This enables us to fit in this information in international charts and tables.

10. The scope of the work of the National Planning Committee is great and will inevitably involve considerable expenditure. We propose to do it as economically as possible but we do not want the work to suffer for lack of funds. A budget of expenditure for the next six months ending 31st December 1939 amounting to Rs. 50,000/-, has been sanctioned by the committee. This sum has to be collected from contributions from provincial governments and the states. Some of these have already contributed generously to our funds and we hope that there will be no difficulty in getting the full sum required. The work that the planning committee is doing, whatever it may ultimately lead to, will in any event be of very great help to all the provincial and state governments.

11. The committee proposes to pay the travelling expenses of its members as well as the members of its sub-committees, such expenses not exceeding second class railway fares. In the case of government or state representatives on the committee or the sub-committees, it is hoped and expected that the provincial or state government concerned will pay the travelling expenses.

12. The committee have their office and headquarters in Bombay and Prof. K.T. Shah, the honorary general secretary of the committee,

is in charge of the office and organisation. Our office will gladly give every assistance in its power to provincial and state governments in the work of planning. The general secretary will also endeavour to meet the wishes of any government if they desire him to visit their headquarters to discuss the work of the National Planning Committee.

13. It is proposed to issue soon, on behalf of the National Planning Committee, a book containing full information about the committee and their work. This book will be sent to provincial and state governments and to all members of sub-committees.

## 15. To Jagdish Prasad<sup>1</sup>

Bombay  
June 20th, 1939

My dear Kunwar Jagdish Prasad,  
I am writing to you on behalf of the National Planning Committee. As you perhaps know, we have just concluded our second session. These have been of a preliminary character, involving a consideration of the approach to the problem of planning. We have appointed a large number of sub-committees and we hope to have their reports by the end of the year or earlier.

2. In this work we seek the cooperation of all the provincial governments and the principal states, as well as the cooperation of the Government of India. It is only with the help of all these governments that all the available information can be collected and a well thought-out scheme can be evolved. In this task the cooperation of the Government of India is very necessary.

3. At a conference of the ministers of industries, held some time back, this question was raised. I understand that Sir Muhammad Zafrullah Khan<sup>2</sup> pointed out that the Government of India had so far not been invited to participate in the work of the National Planning Committee.

1. Home Department (Political) File No. 66/1939, National Archives of India.

2. (b. 1893); leader of the Ahmadiya movement since early thirties and a lawyer of Lahore; attended the Round Table Conference, 1930-32; member, Viceroy's executive council, 1932-39; judge, federal court of India, 1941-47; minister in the government of Pakistan and its permanent representative at the United Nations till 1964; judge, International Court of Justice, 1964-72.



His criticism was justified. And yet, right from the beginning, there was the desire to have the cooperation of the Government of India. In the early stages, there was overlapping of work and consequent confusion. Dr. Syed Mahmud, the minister for industries in Bihar, and Mr. V.V. Giri, the minister for industries in Madras, were the two principal organisers of the National Planning Committee. Sometimes each gave the credit to the other for doing something which in fact was not done. I came in at a much later stage.

4. I am sorry that a formal invitation was not conveyed to the Government of India previously. I would now request them to give us their cooperation and to send one or more representatives to the National Planning Committee whenever this meets.

5. For the present, we have appointed a number of sub-committees and we have ventured to add to the personnel of some of them the names of officials of the Government of India. They can only function of course as such members if the Government of India permits them to do so. Till such permission is given, we shall not announce their names.

6. We shall let you have very soon the names of these officials and you or the department concerned can then consider this question individually. For the present, I am putting before you the broader question of Government of India officials cooperating with our sub-committees. High officials are busy men and we do not want to take them away from their ordinary duties for any length of time. We can even try to hold some of the sub-committee meetings, with which they are concerned, in Delhi to suit their convenience. Even if they cannot always attend the meetings of the sub-committees, their general advice will be valuable. I hope, therefore, that the Government of India will, as a general rule, permit the cooperation of their officials with the National Planning Committee and our sub-committees.

7. We shall be grateful if the various departments of the Government of India supply us with all the information required by us and which is easily available to them. To facilitate this and avoid delay we are prepared to send our general secretary, or other representative, to the department concerned to confer with the head of the department.

8. I should also like to draw your attention to the desirability of utilising the forthcoming census operations to collect useful additional information for the purposes of planning. This information will not come in time for the work of the National Planning Committee, but the future work of the Government of India as well as of the provincial governments will be facilitated if we possess this information. We hope to address the Government of India separately and in greater detail on this question. Compared to advanced countries we lack many kinds of

information and it is difficult to plan without it. It is not proposed to utilise the census operations to gather all these various types of information. This will be difficult and may not be feasible without upsetting the whole structure of the census. What we suggest is that certain specific data, which can be easily fitted in with the census inquiries, should be obtained. This will not involve any considerable additional trouble or expense, and it will save future expense. It is also desirable that, as far as possible, international standards should be adopted in the collection of information through the census and other means.

9. I am enclosing a copy of a note<sup>3</sup> which we are sending to provincial governments and states. This will give you further information. We hope to send additional papers within a few days.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

3. See the preceding item.

## 16. To V.V. Giri<sup>1</sup>

Bombay  
June 20th, 1939

My dear Giri,

I enclose a note which we are sending to various provincial governments and states on the work of the National Planning Committee. I am sending a copy of it to Rajagopalachari also.

We have now to push ahead with our work with full intensity. I hope you will see to it that we get the necessary funds. I do not think there will be any difficulty about it. I have written to Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant about the U.P. contribution.

As you perhaps know, the Punjab Government have promised their cooperation. The Bengal Government have not replied yet. I am writing to them again. I am also writing to the Government of India asking for their cooperation.

1. V.V.Giri Papers, National Planning Committee File, 1939.



I have just received your letter. I think you had better write to the provincial governments first for money. If you want me to write to any particular government I shall do so.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

## 17. To Subhas Chandra Bose<sup>1</sup>

Bombay  
June 21, 1939

My dear Subhas,

The work of the National Planning Committee which you entrusted to me last year grows bigger and bigger and takes up a great deal of time and energy. It is exhausting business.

However I am now writing to you about H.V. Kamath.<sup>2</sup> Last December we appointed him one of the secretaries of the committee for office work. This work has grown so much that we have decided to have a senior and experienced man in charge, and K.T. Shah has been appointed honorary general secretary. He is to have three joint secretaries under him to each of whom we propose to pay an honorarium of Rs. 350/- per month. We proposed appointing Kamath, and Guha<sup>3</sup> and Hutheesing. Indeed I passed an order to that effect.

But a difficulty has arisen. The members of the planning committee, as you know, are a mixed lot and it is no easy matter to pull along with them or to keep them together. Many of them are rather apprehensive as to the direction we are going. Some time back I received complaints about Kamath, our secretary, taking aggressive part in controversial politics. I ignored them for a while but later, when they were renewed, I wrote to Kamath. I pointed out to him the rule we were applying to the staff of the A.I.C.C. which had to function more or less like a civil

1. J.N. Papers, National Planning Committee File No. 135 (Pt. II)/1939, N.M.M.L.
2. H.V. Kamath (b. 1907); resigned from I.C.S., 1938; secretary, National Planning Committee, 1938-39; general secretary, Forward Bloc, 1939-40; imprisoned 1940-45; joined Praja Socialist Party, 1953; member, Lok Sabha, 1962-67.
3. K.D. Guha (1903-1967); industrial chemist; industrial adviser to the government of Ceylon, 1935-39; joint secretary, National Planning Committee, 1939; technical adviser to the government of C.P. and Berar, 1940, and of Assam, 1946-50.

service. This was all the more necessary for a mixed committee like the National Planning Committee. There was no question of anyone being penalised for his views but secretaries of committees should take no public part, by means of speeches, statements, etc., in highly controversial issues. We had some correspondence about this.

The matter arose in the committee and all the members were unanimously of opinion that the secretary should not take part in controversial politics publicly. This was the direction they gave me and later I communicated it to Kamath. Kamath does not seem to be agreeable to these terms although they are for six or eight months only. Under the circumstances, I am helpless and I cannot go against the express directions of the committee. I have suggested to Kamath to think over the matter and, if necessary, to consult you about it. If he cannot accept the directions of the committee, I am afraid the only other course open is for him to resign.<sup>4</sup>

I am writing to you on this subject as you are interested in Kamath.

Yours affectionately,  
Jawaharlal

4. Kamath offered to resign on 22 June 1939. Jawaharlal wrote to him on 23 June 1939: "It is evident that you are far keener on active political work than on the quiet type of work required in the planning committee. The two types of work represent different mentalities and cannot with ease be carried on at the same time.... As a newcomer into the political field there seems to be no obvious reason why you should be eager to speak in public or write on controversial topics in the press...."

## 18. The Necessity of Industrialisation<sup>1</sup>

Every individual in the country should be enabled to have 30 yards of cloth per year to clothe himself, and for achieving this aim mills are necessary to produce this amount of cloth, as hand-spinning and hand-weaving alone cannot produce the requisite amount.

With national planning, I believe, the standard of living of the people of India should be raised in every sphere. Cottage industries and khadi should be encouraged but industrialisation of the country on a

1. *National Herald*, 29 June 1939.



wide scale alone can produce the requisite amount of material required for the people if they are to have a higher standard of life.

## 19. Planning and the Public<sup>1</sup>

The second session of the National Planning Committee ended a few days ago after two full weeks of heavy work. We had the advantage of the cooperation of provincial governments and several important states. Every provincial government, except one, has promised its cooperation to the National Planning Committee, and we hope that the one remaining government will also join the others in this important work, which must necessarily affect every province and every state in India.

The scope of this work has grown and the field we have to cover is vast. The committee cannot, and does not intend to, formulate a full and detailed scheme of national planning within the short time at its disposal. That will require far more detailed information and surveys than we possess today. That will be the work of a more permanent planning committee which the state may establish at a later stage. But even for that more detailed work, a preliminary survey of the entire problem is essential. This survey, broad in outline as it must necessarily be, has to take into consideration all aspects of the problem.

Planning means laying down a scheme of a planned economy for the nation, comprising all its activities, and their proper coordination for the common good. Planning does not mean concentration on a few industries, and ignoring the other aspects of the problem, including the human aspect.

It is with this objective in view that the National Planning Committee has set to work. This planning will require not only the cooperation of the government, but also the cooperation and intelligent appreciation of the general public. It must, if it is to succeed, have the goodwill of the national movement which represents the most vital urge of the country. It must therefore fall in line with the general principles laid down by the Congress.

1. Statement to the press, Bombay, 30 June 1939. *The Bombay Chronicle*, 1 July 1939.

In view of the vastness of the problem, the National Planning Committee has appointed twenty nine sub-committees on various subjects. These sub-committees consist of experts and eminent public men from all over India and their labours will result in bringing together of a vast body of coordinated information on all aspects of the various subjects. It will be for the full committee to consider their reports and then prepare its own broad outline of the scheme of a planned economy for the nation.

It is hoped that provincial governments will carry on surveys and inquiries in their respective provinces. Some have already done so. Bombay, Central Provinces and a few others have appointed committees of enquiry. I would especially like to congratulate the Bihar Government and their enthusiastic minister for industries, Dr. Syed Mahmud, on the way they have already tackled this problem.

With a view to cope with this work the office of the National Planning Committee in Bombay has been reorganised and the staff is being increased. Prof. K.T. Shah has been appointed honorary general secretary and under his able guidance we look forward to the office functioning efficiently and rapidly. The committee has decided to have three joint secretaries to assist Prof. K.T. Shah, and accordingly Shri K.D. Guha, Shri H.V. Kamath and Shri G.P. Hutheesing have been appointed. I regret that Shri H.V. Kamath has not found it possible to continue as joint secretary. Shri G.P. Hutheesing has been working in the office for the last six months, and will continue as joint secretary. Shri K.D. Guha brings to us knowledge and experience of the work. He was connected some years ago with the industries department of the Bengal Government. His services were lent to the Ceylon Government. And for the past five years, he functioned as the technical adviser to the government of Ceylon. As such he initiated a number of schemes in Ceylon, including a four-year plan for industrial development for which the Ceylon Government has allotted a large sum of money.

We hope that by the end of this year or earlier the work of all our sub-committees will be completed, and early next year the National Planning Committee will be able to submit its report to the Congress Working Committee and to the provincial governments. The Working Committee has been good enough to extend the time for submission of our report to March 31, 1940.



20. To Subhas Chandra Bose<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
July 11, 1939

My dear Subhas,

I have just received your letter of the 8th July.<sup>2</sup> I am afraid we differ on this subject as apparently we do on many others. It would serve no useful purpose to have an argument about it. My own view was this that Kamath had taken up a wrong position in this matter. You have attributed a particular motive to me which is fair neither to me nor to yourself. It was totally immaterial to me what views Kamath had in regard to Congress or other politics so long as his views were not aggressively expressed so as to come in the way of the work he was doing in the planning committee. I had taken exception early in January I think to a statement of his on planning. I did not object to that statement in the least but to the fact that he made it. It seemed to me that he was far more attracted by the publicity side of public life than by the side represented by the planning committee. If that was his desire, which he was perfectly entitled to have, then the planning committee did not afford any scope for him.

You refer to A.K. Saha<sup>3</sup> and suggest that he might have been appointed a joint secretary. Saha as a member of the planning committee might have been appointed an honorary general secretary but he could not be appointed a paid joint secretary unless he resigned his membership of the planning committee. I did not want him to resign this membership as we wanted to profit by his special experience in the sub-committee of which he is a member. He could not have been a member of the sub-committee if he became a joint secretary. I did not think that it was possible to make him general secretary as this required no technical knowledge but a wide acquaintance with Indian economic conditions and people in India. I have been trying hard to get a suitable place for him in some provincial government.

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. Subhas had complained that Jawaharlal was trying to restrict Kamath's political liberty and the objection to Kamath's views was taken not by others but by Jawaharlal himself; "...you wanted to get rid of Kamath because he gave expression to a particular view."

3. (b. 1900); trained in Soviet Union in power and fuel technology; member, National Planning Committee, and secretary, power and fuel sub-committee.



I am sorry you find it difficult to understand me. Perhaps it is not worth trying.

Yours affectionately,  
Jawaharlal

**21. To V.V. Giri<sup>1</sup>**

Bombay  
14th July, 1939

My dear Giri,

We had a meeting today of some of the chairmen and secretaries of the sub-committees round about Bombay. We propose to hold another such meeting for northern India in Allahabad on August 3rd. It is not necessary for you to take the trouble to come so far.

We must hurry up to have our collections from provinces and states. We are running short of funds. I understand you asked for an audited statement of accounts. Unfortunately, the auditor has gone out of Bombay. Soon after he returns, we shall send you the audited statement. Meanwhile, a statement of accounts has been sent.

Shah tells me that you asked for the list which contains provincial and state contributions. I thought you had taken the list. Anyway, it does not contain very much information. For the major provinces, the sum allotted was Rs. 5,000. For a province like the C.P., Rs. 3,000. Orissa, Sind, and N.W.F.P. are poor and almost anything can be accepted from them, say, Rs. 500. Hyderabad offered Rs. 4,000, Bhopal, Rs. 1,500.

As Punjab is cooperating now, you should write to the Punjab Government also. I have myself spoken to the U.P. Government, and they have agreed. Please write to all these governments and ask them to send some part of their contributions as soon as possible, if not the whole.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. V.V. Giri Papers, National Planning Committee File, 1939.



## THE INDIAN STATES





## 1. Repression in Travancore<sup>1</sup>

There cannot be a free British India or a free federation with fascist cells dotted about the country. It is monstrous that absolute terror exists in one of the most educationally advanced states.<sup>2</sup> The repression is being directed by gentlemen who have openly expressed admiration for Hitler and Mussolini and advocate their system for India and Britain. To retain puppet princes and a totalitarian rule, the British Government has been able to get hold of men of this fascist type to deal with those whose only crime has been that they have agitated for grant of responsible government in the state and whose demand for civil liberties is treated as sedition.

1. London, 21 October 1938. From *The Hindu*, 23 October 1938.
2. The secretary, Travancore State People's Defence Committee, stated on 8 October 1938 that there was a secret agency at work to create violence and discredit the state Congress as a violent organisation and that agency had the support of the police.

## 2. The New Awakening in Indian States<sup>1</sup>

Three things are quite essential for the well-being of our country: firstly, the possession of military power to guard and defend ourselves, secondly, economic freedom, and, thirdly, complete control over the foreign policy of the country. For the attainment of this objective it is essential that there should be a united front. Various communities and factions should liquidate their dissensions and rally under the Congress banner.

The British Government's attitude in the recent European crisis has been deplorable. Forgetting for the moment Britain's policy vis-a-vis India, her role in the European crisis is a sufficient justification for India to sever her connections with the British Government. The case of Czechoslovakia has no parallel in the entire history of the world.

India is undergoing a process of silent revolution. We are living in stirring times, and wherever one goes, one cannot but feel the strange

1. Speech at Bombay, 18 November 1938. From *The Hindu*, 19 November 1938.

change that has taken place. The peasants, the workers and the people in the states, show signs of a new life and activity. Complete unity for the attainment of freedom and elimination of the reactionary elements which impede our progress should be our aim.

We have reached a point in the history of the world when we have to take a definite path. We have to take either the path of democracy or that of fascism. We, of course, stand for complete democracy and the Congress has made it very clear.

There is a new awakening in the Indian states. In Hyderabad, Travancore, Rajkot and elsewhere, the situation is boiling up. It is not the work of a handful of outsiders who have created this situation. It is all an evidence of the spirit of the times. Even Mahatma Gandhi could not have succeeded if there was not sufficient awakening in the country. I am happy that the message has reached the Indian states where there is a similar awakening and activity for the freedom and betterment of the people. The popular agitation in the states can never be damped down. Let the states' people be united in their efforts, for conferences and meetings would not produce satisfactory results.

In the Congress provinces, while there is very little real power for the ministers to wield, they should not be subjected to embarrassing criticisms. There was firing by the police during the one-day general strike in Bombay early last week and I regret the incident.<sup>2</sup> I am not prepared to apportion the blame. The new questions and problems that arise from day to day sometimes present new difficulties. We are human beings and are liable to make mistakes. We should, however, strive to tread the right path. We may falter, but we shall always go along the right path. My request to the people is not to do anything which would create dissensions among the workers and the peasants.

The frontiers of Indian freedom are no longer her geographical borders but are extended up to Spain and China where the Spanish and the Chinese are fighting the common battle of world democracy.

The devious ways of Britain's pro-fascist policy have closed the door on republican Spain even for getting food supplies from outside. The rival forces ranged against each other are democracy and fascism, and the British Government sympathises with the latter. India must dissociate herself from the policy of this reactionary government.

2. The one-day strike organised by the Bombay provincial trade union congress in cooperation with the Independent Labour Party to protest against the Bombay Trades Disputes Bill on 7 November 1938 resulted in some disturbances which led to firing by the police thrice.



The reactionary European policy of the British Government makes us more determined to get away from this empire. What does Dominion Status mean even to the dominions when under the present dispensation they are denied control of finance, foreign policy and defence? India therefore wants complete independence.

It is foolish for the rulers of Hyderabad, Travancore and Rajkot to believe that they can, with the aid of a handful of men, crush popular movements for freedom. These movements are but a ripple of a mighty wave which under the dominating influence of Gandhiji has engulfed the whole country. I do hope that the rulers would see the wisdom of progressing with the rest of India.

The struggle in the Indian states is not against any individual but against the system that does not allow them to grow.

It is time that all the shackles binding the people are shattered. The map of the world is being re-drawn and I want the states' people to decide their own fate now.

We want freedom for India as a whole and not for a section only. As there has been an awakening among the people of British India through the instrumentality of the Indian National Congress, there should be such an awakening among the people of the Indian states also so that the fight against imperialism and autocracy may go on all over the country at the same time. Our fight is not against any individual but against autocracy and oppression itself. Some rulers of the native states may be good people, but when they get power in their hands, they become inhuman.

### 3. To Edward Thompson<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
November 29, 1938

Dear Edward,

I enclose an article by Gandhiji which has appeared in the *Harijan*. I think this will interest you.

The change from Europe to India has its advantages. There is not so much tension and helplessness visible here. But conditions are pretty bad here also in a different sense, and all manner of complicated problems insistently demand solution. The Indian states are coming very much into the picture. In a large number of them popular movements

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

have grown up and there has been severe repression. But the rulers are sufficiently frightened of these new developments.

When are you thinking of coming to India?

Yours,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

#### 4. Indian States to Form Part of Free India<sup>1</sup>

Among the many developments in recent years in India, the awakening of the states' people is perhaps the most remarkable. It was time they did so, for it is a notorious fact that the Indian states are terribly backward and reactionary and completely out of place in the modern world.

The States People's Conference has a great responsibility. It has to organise and control these new forces and direct them into right channels. Mere enthusiasm and excitement will lead to no results unless they are disciplined and rightly directed.

It is clear that the only ideal we can have in view is that of an independent India comprising all the Indian states and provinces.

The unity of India cannot be broken up, nor can there be different degrees of freedom in various parts of India. At the same time, there is no reason why there should not be a great measure of autonomy in different states so as to give them the fullest opportunity of self-development. The present objective of responsible government in the states within the framework of a free India is the right objective.

The National Congress has given its full approval to this. It has, at the same time, rightly pointed out that the burden of the struggle must inevitably lie on the people of the states. The wisdom of this decision is shown by the rapid growth of consciousness among the states' people.

I trust that the movement for freedom in the Indian states will keep in the closest touch with the wider national movement, and will follow the methods and policies of the National Congress.

1. Message to *The States' People*, the journal of the All India States People's Conference, published from Bombay. *National Herald*, 30 November 1938.



## 5. To Gangaram Wazir<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
January 6, 1939

Dear Sir,<sup>2</sup>

I am in receipt of your letter of the 19th December which I have read with care and interest. I have been taking interest in Kashmir affairs for several years and I have followed recent events there. I have read most of the relevant statements that have been issued, including those written by Professor Gulshan Rai.<sup>3</sup> I have no desire to express opinions about matters with which I am insufficiently acquainted. But there are certain general principles applicable to all states in India, big or small. They apply to Kashmir as well as to Hyderabad.

I am afraid that your letter does not keep these principles in view. Professor Gulshan Rai's articles seem to me in conflict with them also and I found it impossible to agree with his conclusions, quite apart from what the facts might be.

It is quite clear to me that the time has come when the ideal of full responsible government must be accepted by every state and immediate steps should be taken towards this end. I quite understand that these steps might vary in regard to particular states concerned, but they must be substantial steps.

I must condemn all attempts at violence and hooliganism by whomsoever committed and, if any printed posters have been issued as incitement to violence, I should be glad to see them.

The present position is that the state government has applied ordinances<sup>4</sup> which can only be described as monstrous. Any government which uses such measures cannot claim the slightest indulgence. Further, a large number of people are in prison for political purposes.

I think it is correct to say that the popular movement in Kashmir was communal in its origin. I think it has undergone some change and is definitely seeking a wider platform. But even if it was communal, it would not take away from the rightness of the demand made by it.

1. Rajendra Prasad Papers, National Archives of India.

2. (1883-1969); served the Jammu and Kashmir Government in various capacities; president, Dogra Sabha, Jammu, for many years.

3. A journalist of Lahore.

4. An ordinance, first enacted for a few days on 24 September 1931 to enforce martial law, was again promulgated on 1 June 1933 to suppress the popular movement. It vested the police with wide powers.

The fact that few Hindus have joined it does not redound to their credit or to their wisdom. By this communal policy the Hindus would injure themselves more than anyone else. The point is that a demand, if it is right, must be accepted whosoever makes it, and in a state like Kashmir, a popular movement must inevitably be predominantly Muslim just as in Hyderabad, a popular movement must largely be Hindu. It is curious that in both these states the popular movements are dubbed communal by the governments. The right way to strengthen nationalism in Kashmir is for the Hindus to ally themselves fully with the popular movement and to seek to remove all blemishes from it.

Everyone must realise that the states are going to have responsible government. If so, the obvious course for minorities, even in order to protect themselves, is to line up with the popular movement.

I would very much like to visit Kashmir myself, and I may do so in the future when an opportunity offers itself.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

## 6. The Ranpur Incident<sup>1</sup>

The recent tragic incident is deplorable and will result in a setback to the movement for freedom in the states.<sup>2</sup> But it is not enough merely to condemn it; we must seek to understand it. It is clear that mob violence will bring all manner of forces into play which will injure the cause of the people and will divert attention from the real issue. If we are to proceed on the lines we have laid down, as we must, we have to instil the lesson of peaceful action in the minds of our people in the states as elsewhere in India. The states are new to this kind of activity, and their people have had little chance of being disciplined and trained in the technique which has brought so much success to us.

But we must also remember what the people of the states have had to put up with. In Orissa, there has been repeated firing on unarmed people and many persons have been killed thereby. In Dhenkanal, the

1. Signed article printed in *National Herald*, 12 January 1939.

2. Between September and November 1938, seventeen persons were killed in Ranpur state in Orissa in course of seven rounds of firing and hundreds left their homes.



state authorities have behaved with extreme brutality towards their people. Even in Ranpur the crowd was fired upon and at least one person killed before it lost control of itself and misbehaved. Life is held cheap in the states when it is a question of poor Indian lives. Surely it must be recognised that this standard of value can no longer be accepted. Nor is the movement going to be suppressed by guns or bayonets.

Events in the states are being followed with the most anxious interest all over India. Let no man think that because we are quiet about them and do not shout, we are indifferent to the happenings in Kashmir and Hyderabad, in Kathiawar and Orissa, in Rajputana and the Punjab states, in Travancore and in the numerous other states of India. We know well that hundreds of brave people lie still in prison in Kashmir and this glorious valley is darkened by ordinances which are monstrous in their severity. We know also that Hyderabad still holds pride of place in the suppression of civil liberties, and recently the treatment of political prisoners there has been shocking. Rajputana, that ancient home of chivalry, is now far better known as the home of reaction and feudal tyranny. Travancore still struggles in the woods.

But there is light also, as in Rajkot, Aundh<sup>3</sup> and in some other states. And there is light in the eyes and hearts of millions of people living in the states throughout India, and that light will not be extinguished by repression and terror.

A significant feature of recent events has been the part taken by the Government of India and its agents in the states. In many states, even the principal ministers are British officials. These agents and officials not only oppose progress and help reaction, but sometimes come in the way of the rulers coming to terms with their people. It is time that this was ended, for this foreign intervention and intrusion can no longer be tolerated.

3. The raja of Aundh, a small state in Maharashtra, granted responsible government. He promulgated a constitution which made Aundh a federation of village republics.

## 7. Aundh<sup>1</sup>

With conflict going on in so many states and major crises developing in others, it is a relief and a pleasure to think of those states where the rulers have put themselves in line with their people and the spirit of the times and accepted the demand for responsible government. We are told that this has been done in Hindole<sup>2</sup> of Orissa and in the Banaras state<sup>3</sup> as well as in some others. Information is lacking as to the steps actually taken to bring about the change, and perhaps it is a little premature to rejoice. We have seen what has happened in Rajkot, and there will be many such slips and obstruction even after victory seems assured. For strange influences are at work behind the scenes and the unfortunate ruler is often a mere puppet in others' hands.

But in the case of Aundh there is no need to doubt or hesitate for the deed is done. The raja of Aundh<sup>4</sup> deserves the fullest congratulations not only for the constitution he has inaugurated but for the graceful manner of doing it. There have been no mental reservations. Having decided on a course of action, he went ahead with confidence and lined himself up with his people. I have not got this constitution before me but I understand that it makes Aundh a kind of federation of village republics. Aundh is a small state but it has done a big thing and set an example which, we hope, others will follow.

1. Signed article printed in *National Herald*, 29 January 1939.
2. The ruler of Hindole announced a number of political reforms to be introduced in the state from April 1939. He declared the goal of his government was to be a full responsible government.
3. Progressive constitutional reforms were introduced in Banaras state.
4. (1868-1951); Bhavanrao Shrinivasrao *alias* Balasaheb Pant.

## 8. Struggle in the Indian States<sup>1</sup>

The year 1938 saw the sudden emergence on the political horizon of India of the problem of the Indian states. The problem was no new

1. Message to *The States' People*, Allahabad, 3 February 1939. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.



one. It is as old as the problem of Indian freedom but nevertheless it had taken a back place till then and all our energies had been concentrated on the rest of India. But the remarkable awakening of the people of the states has forced attention to this vital problem and made us realise, as never before, that there can be no independence for India unless we solve the problem of the states. This problem must be viewed in its true perspective. It is a struggle against a reactionary regime and feudal relics. But even more so and essentially it is a struggle against British imperialism. This imperialism, failing to check us directly, now seeks to do so indirectly and through the states. The year 1939 will be largely dominated by this problem and I trust that it will take us a long way to its solution, thereby bringing us on the doorstep of independence.

## 9. To G. B. Pant<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
February 4, 1939

My dear Pantji,

Jamnalalji has just telephoned to me from Agra. He pointed out to me that the Jaipur police had entered with him into British territory on the last occasion. He seems to think that it was improper for them to do so and he wanted me to inform you of this fact. I do not know what the law is about it. He is going again to Jaipur tonight. They will apply the Princes Protection Act and arrest him at the station which is British territory.<sup>2</sup>

I do not know exactly where and how the provincial government can come in. But I think the closest attention should be paid to this matter so that the provincial government should not be put in a false position or exploited in any way by the Government of India or the Jaipur authorities. In Orissa there has been a conflict between the government and the provincial government in regard to certain matters affecting the state, especially the extradition of some people. It may be that some questions might arise here too.

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. Jamnalal Bajaj, who was associated with the Jaipur Praja Mandal, was arrested on 5 February 1939 for defying the ban on his entry into the state.

Jamnalalji informs me further that the Jaipur Praja Mandal has opened an office in Agra. He hoped that the authorities in Agra will not put any obstruction in the way of their work.

Yours affectionately,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

## 10. On Your Feet !<sup>1</sup>

The Congress presidential election has attracted, as it should, considerable attention, though perhaps few people know all the facts or realise the background of this election. The press is full of statements made by groups and individuals and the words leftist and rightist are bandied about without any regard to their meaning. There is a spate of good advice. The election will have served at least one good purpose if it serves to make us think clearly about the situation in India and abroad. Vague talk and loud assertions or criticisms do not make a leftist or a rightist or help in drawing up a policy. It is necessary therefore that this talk and criticism should be confined in the narrow channels of reasoning and reality and should lead to the clear and precise definition of our policy, which should be the basis of our future action. The problem before us is the achievement of India's independence and the establishment of a free united democratic state in India. It is from that point of view that everything should be judged. Yet we argue about relatively petty matters and think in terms of this office or that.

Meanwhile, the world rushes ahead and bloody reaction grips it by the throat. Meanwhile, India is shaken afresh by vast popular movements and at the same time disintegrating forces raise their ugly heads. How are we to meet this challenge?

Today the problem of problems is that of the Indian states, of the people of these states who have patiently submitted, too long already, to autocracy and misrule. They submit no longer, and from the northern Himalayan passes to Kanya Kumari in the far south, millions of them are awake and moving to that freedom which has so long been denied to them. Today we face British imperialism in one of its ugliest phases

1. Statement to the press, Allahabad, 7 February 1939. *The Hindustan Times*, 8 February 1939.



—that of patron and supporter of feudalism and slave conditions in the states. Today, as of old, Gandhiji is the soft but iron voice of India challenging this imperialism and preparing for a struggle with it. Everything else is secondary to this major struggle for in its sweep it will comprise federation, provincial autonomy and the other impediments to our freedom.

Rajkot is in the grip of it already and that noble and beloved lady Kasturba has gone in her old age back to gaol.<sup>2</sup> Jaipur has accepted the challenge of imperialism and India's faithful servant, Jammalal Bajaj, has disappeared behind prison walls. In Orissa, British imperialism gathers its armies to sustain tyranny, corruption and degradation of the worst type, and to crush the newly arisen people of the states. In Travancore, autocracy assumes a fascist colour and another struggle looms ahead. In Mysore,<sup>3</sup> there are the beginnings of conflict again. In the great states of Hyderabad and Kashmir popular movements are being crushed on the frivolous plea of communalism.

We have grown complacent and petty-minded and forgetful of our great problems. But the call is coming to us again, India calls and the call grows louder and more insistent. On your feet, men and women of India, on your feet, the time for marching approaches. On your feet!

2. The ruler having failed to introduce reforms, the satyagraha was resumed and Kasturba Gandhi was arrested on 3 February 1939 while entering the state for offering satyagraha.
3. Satyagraha was resumed in the state when Congress members were not included in the reforms council.

## 11. The Anachronisms of the Indian States<sup>1</sup>

The states in modern India are anachronistic and do not deserve to exist. The times have changed, new ideas and new forces are coming into play every day; yet the states remain static. Few of them have any constitutions and if there are any in certain states, they are mere apologies.

The rulers cannot claim to have descended from a long and ancient line of rajas. Many of them came into existence after the disruption of

1. Speech at Allahabad, 9 February 1939. From *National Herald*, 10 February 1939.

the Mughal rule. After the advent of the British there was again a redistribution of territories between various chiefs who gave their support to the foreigners.

British imperialism is fighting the people's movement in the states through the rulers. But the rulers should not think that the British are fighting for them; they are in fact fighting for the existence of British imperialism.

Political and social conditions are changing rapidly and if the institutions that governed society do not also change with the same rapidity, the result will be that, like old clothes, old social systems would have perforce to give place to new ones which we call revolution. Our movement in India till now was concerned mostly with political liberty. We had no time to devote to social movements, such as would improve the living conditions of the workers, kisans and other classes. It is admitted that social conditions cannot be set right without political freedom. The problem of the states comes into the picture at this stage. We cannot bring about any change in the internal affairs of the states without obtaining political rights for the people. The Indian states seem to be but little affected by the new phase through which the country is passing. The states being units under rulers who are protected by the British army have in many cases no constitution. If there are any they are mere apologies for constitutions. The rajas, maharajas, nawabs and chiefs consider the income of the states as their personal money, and instead of spending it on construction of hospitals, schools, etc., spend such income on their personal comforts.

It is wrong to suppose that these rulers, excepting some in Rajputana, are descended from a long and ancient line of rulers. After the fall of the Mughul empire, some assertive men, who had the strength and courage to establish their hold over small territories, occupied them. They were subdued one by one because they were holding their states without any feelings of nationalism. After their conquest, the territories were redistributed by the conqueror, as it suited him.

The important question to be considered is what role these states have played in the history of India during the last 150 years. The life in Europe has changed, the European society has undergone a change and the economic conditions have also changed considerably but the states in India have not been affected in the least by the changes taking place elsewhere. The people of the states are where they were a century ago. This state of affairs is being maintained not so much through the strength of the rajas, maharajas and nawabs but through the might of their British masters.





WITH SUBHAS BOSE AT ALLAHABAD STATION, 1939



AT ALL INDIA STATES PEOPLE'S CONFERENCE, LUDHIANA, 15 FEBRUARY 1939



The British resident and the British dewan are responsible for all that is happening in Rajkot. These British officers are fighting the battle of British imperialism against the popular movement, and nobody should think that they are fighting for the sake of the ruler of Rajkot.

The very fact that the British dewan at Rajkot upset the understanding arrived at between the popular movement and the Thakore Saheb shows that the British do not favour the grant of liberty to the people of the states. The same attitude was adopted in Ranpur state. The people of that state while on their way to make representations were stopped. They were provoked till in their annoyance they lost control over themselves and attacked a British official with lathis resulting in his death. Thus the British officials of the states support the rulers in suppressing the people.

This game is being played by the British rulers in the states in order to counteract the freedom movement and stem its progress in British India. Princes and rulers are a willing party to this game, lest they be turned out, as many of their order have been turned out before. They also fear that if popular movements in the states succeed, their privileges and their rule might be brought to an end. To checkmate the movement in the states, they are branding it as a communal movement. In Kashmir the movement also enjoys the support of Hindus who are in a minority.

In Hyderabad, the Hindus being in a majority the movement was naturally started by them. There the movement enjoys the support of the Muslims also. To call it a communal movement is absurd.

The agitation in Travancore, it is being said, is an anti-Christian movement. I dislike such movements being called communal.

It is idle to suggest that all agitations now going on in the states are due to external influences. No handful of people from outside can bring about any popular upheaval in a state.

The satyagraha in Hyderabad has nothing to do with the satyagraha movement of the state Congress; the latter was started due to the refusal of the authorities to allow even the most elementary rights, such as enrolment of Congress members. A satyagraha movement should always have its origin from inside the state or the territory where it is launched and it should have as its purpose the strengthening of the internal organisation. As such I do not approve of people from outside stirring up agitations in the states. The agitation in the states is, however, most opportune and necessary at present.

Mahatma Gandhi, who has always his hand on the pulse of the people, knows which is the right battle-ground and which is the most important issue to tackle at a given time.

## 12. Freedom Is Indivisible<sup>1</sup>

Comrades,

Year after year this conference of the people of the Indian states has met in session and discussed the problems of the states. Year after year it has raised its voice in condemnation of the autocracy and misrule, the corruption and the degradation that has prevailed in many of these states. The labours of this conference, and far more so of the National Congress, have borne fruit, and today there is a mighty awakening among the people of the states. When, in after years, the history of India comes to be written, the year 1938 will stand out as the year of this awakening. The historian of that distant future will not wonder at this awakening; but he will marvel that the millions who inhabit the Indian states submitted for generations to intolerable and appalling conditions, and that a system of government which had long vanished in other parts of the world still continued in India.

The year 1938 has become history, and we stand on the threshold of 1939. The movement for freedom gathers pace, and the whole of India looks with sympathy and understanding on this great struggle in the states. At this vital moment you have summoned me to this conference and I have gladly come at your bidding. I come to you not only because I am intensely interested in the freedom of the people of the states, but as the bearer of the goodwill of the rest of India and as a pledge of our solidarity.

Many people have in past years criticised the attitude of the National Congress towards the states, and heated argument has taken place about intervention and non-intervention. That criticism and argument have perished with the yesterday that has gone and are meaningless today. Yet it is worthwhile to consider briefly the development of Congress policy in regard to the states. I have not always approved of all the expressions of this policy or liked the emphasis on certain aspects of the problem. But I am convinced that this fundamental policy was the correct one under the circumstances, and, indeed, subsequent events have justified it completely. A policy aiming at vital change or revolution must keep in touch with reality and the conditions that prevail. As these conditions change, that policy changes. Brave words and gestures

1. Presidential address at the All India States People's Conference, Ludhiana, 15 February 1939. *The Tribune*, 16 February 1939. Reprinted in *The Unity of India*, (London, 1941), pp. 27-46.



or strongly-worded resolutions, out of touch with objective conditions, do not bring about that pregnant atmosphere out of which revolutionary change is born. Nor can that condition be created artificially or mass movements launched unless the masses themselves are ready and prepared. The Congress realised this and knew of the unpreparedness of the people in the states; it husbanded its energy in the struggle outside, well realising that this was the most effective method of influencing the states' people and making them ready for their own struggle.

The Haripura resolution was a landmark in the evolution of Congress policy, and it enunciated this in clear language.<sup>2</sup> The integrity and unity of India was an essential part of the independence we worked for, and the same full measure of political, social and economic freedom was to come to the states as to the rest of India. There could be no compromise on this, and the Congress declared afresh in favour of full responsible government and the guarantee of civil liberty in the states. Further, it declared to be its right and privilege to work for the attainment of these objectives in the states. There was no question of non-intervention; the Congress, as representing the will of the Indian people, recognises no bars which limit its freedom of activity in any matter pertaining to India and her people. It is its right and privilege and its duty to intervene in any such matter whenever the interests of India demand it. Not to do so would be to deny its own function and to betray the cause which it seeks to represent.

But it is for the Congress and the people of India to determine when and where they will intervene and what policy they must pursue, so that their intervention might be effective and fruitful of results. The limitation, if any, is of its own making, or is caused by external circumstances which it is wise enough to recognise. No outside authority can limit the function of the Congress, just as no power or authority can set bounds to the aspirations or advancement of the Indian people.

The Congress knew well that the backwardness of the states hindered our national progress and that there could be no freedom for India unless the states ceased to be what they were. The Congress was eager to bring about this essential and vital change, and yet it knew that the change could only come about from below, when the people of the states grew self-reliant and organised and capable of shouldering the burden of their struggle. It emphasized this. Not to have done so would have been to mislead and encourage vain delusion and delay the building up in the states themselves of organisations which would represent the strength and will of the people.

2. See *Selected Works*, Vol. 8, p. 379.

The wisdom of the Congress stands amply justified today when we see the developments that have taken place since Haripura. All the states are astir, and in many of them powerful mass movements are functioning. The people of the states are rapidly coming into line with the rest of India; they are no longer a burden and a dead-weight keeping us back. They are setting the pace for India today and our national politics are dominated by their struggle. The time has come, therefore, for the integration of these various struggles in the states *inter se* and with the major struggle against British imperialism. There are no longer many different struggles going on for independence; there is only one mighty struggle for India's freedom, though its aspects may vary and though its battle-grounds may be many. As Gandhiji has said, the struggle for liberty, wherever it takes place, is a struggle for all India.

It is in the fitness of things that at this moment of vital crisis for the states, India's leader, ever thinking of her freedom and jealous of her honour, should step out and in his ringing voice of old, that we remember so well, give faith and courage to our people. Gandhiji's lead has finally settled all the old arguments that obscured the issue, and that issue stands out now, clear and definite.

There are about six hundred states in India—big ones and small ones and tiny ones which one cannot even place on the map. They differ greatly among themselves, and some have advanced industrially and educationally, and some have had competent rulers or ministers. The majority of them, however, are sinks of reaction and incompetence and unrestrained autocratic power, sometimes exercised by vicious and degraded individuals. But whether the ruler happens to be good or bad, or his ministers competent or incompetent, the evil lies in the system. This system has vanished from the rest of the world, and left to itself, it would have vanished from India also long ago. But in spite of its manifest decay and stagnation, it has been propped up and artificially maintained by British imperialism. Offspring of the British power in India, suckled by imperialism for its own purposes, it has survived till today, though mighty revolutions have shaken the world and changed it, empires have collapsed and crowds of princes and petty rulers have faded away. That system has no inherent importance or strength; it is the strength of British imperialism that counts. For us in India that system has in reality been one of the faces of imperialism. Therefore when conflict comes we must recognise who our opponent is.

We are told now of the so-called independence of the states and of their treaties with the paramount power, which are sacrosanct and inviolable and apparently must go on for ever and ever. We have recently seen what happens to international treaties and the most sacred



of covenants when they do not suit the purposes of imperialism. We have seen these treaties torn up, friends and allies basely deserted and betrayed and the pledged word broken by England and France. Democracy and freedom were the sufferers and so it did not matter. But when reaction and autocracy and imperialism stand to lose, it does matter, and treaties, however moth-eaten and harmful to the people they might be, have to be preserved. It is a monstrous imposition to be asked to put up with these treaties of a century and a quarter ago, in the making of which the people had no voice or say. It is fantastic to expect the people to keep on their chains of slavery, imposed upon them by force and fraud, and to submit to a system which crushes the life-blood out of them. We recognise no such treaties and we shall in no event accept them. The only final authority and paramount power that we recognise is the will of the people, and the only thing that counts ultimately is the good of the people.

A new theory of the independence of the states has been advanced in recent years, and it has been advanced by the very power that holds them in an iron grip and keeps them in subjection. Neither history nor constitutional law gives any justification for this, and, if we examine the origins of these states, most of their rulers would be reduced to the status of feudal barons. But we need not trouble ourselves with legal research, as the practice and facts are plain enough. This practice has been for the British power to dominate these states completely, and its slightest gesture is a command to them, which they disobey at their peril. The political department of the Government of India pulls the strings, and the puppets dance to its tune; the local resident is the master of the situation; and latterly the practice has grown of British officials being imposed as ministers of the rulers of the states. If this is independence, then it will be interesting to learn how it differs from the most abject subjection.

There is no independence in the states and there is going to be none for it is hardly possible geographically, and it is entirely opposed to the conception of a united free India. It is conceivable and desirable in the case of the larger states for them to have a great deal of autonomy within the framework of an Indian federation. But they will have to remain integral parts of India, and the major matters of common concern must be controlled by a democratic federal centre. Internally they will have responsible government.

It is clear that the problem of the states would be easy of solution if the conflict was confined to the people and the ruler. Many of the rulers, left to themselves, would ultimately line themselves up with the people, and, if they hesitated to do so, the pressure from below would

soon induce them to change their minds. Not to do so would imperil their position, and the only alternative would be complete removal. The Congress and the various praja mandals have so far made every effort to induce the rulers to side with their people and establish responsible government. They must realise that for them not to agree to do so will not stop the coming of freedom to their people; their opposition will only place an insurmountable barrier between them and their people, and an arrangement between the two will then become exceedingly difficult. The map of the world has changed many times during the last hundred years; empires have ceased to be and new countries have arisen. Even now before our very eyes we see this map changing. It requires no prophet to say with confidence that the Indian states system is doomed even as the British Empire, which has so long protected it, is doomed. It is the path of prudence as well as of wisdom for the rulers to line themselves up with their people and be sharers with them in the new freedom, and instead of being despotic and disliked rulers, with a precarious tenure, to be proud and equal citizens of a great commonwealth.

A few of the rulers of the states have realised this and have taken some steps in the right direction. One of them, the raja of Aundh, chief of a small state, has distinguished himself by his wisdom in granting responsible government to his people, and is doing so with grace and goodwill.

But, unhappily, most of them stick to their old ways and show no signs of change. They demonstrate afresh the lesson of history that when a class has fulfilled its purpose and the world has no need of it, it decays and loses wisdom and all capacity. It cannot adapt itself to changing conditions. In a vain attempt to hold on to what is fading away, it loses even what little it might have retained. The British ruling classes have had a long and brilliant career, and throughout the nineteenth century and after they dominated the world. Yet today we see them nerveless, witless, incapable of consecutive thought or action, and, in a frantic attempt to hold on to some vested interests, ruining their great position in the world and shattering the proud edifice of their empire. It is even so with classes that have fulfilled their function and outlived their utility. If the British ruling classes are manifestly failing, in spite of their prestige and tradition and training, what shall we say of our Indian princes who for generations past have grown up in decadence and irresponsibility? The problems of government require something more than a knowledge of how to manage polo ponies, or recognise the breeds of dogs, or have the skill to kill large numbers of inoffensive animals.



But even if the rulers of the states were willing, their willingness would not take them far. For the master of their immediate destiny is the agent of the British Government and they dare not offend him. We have seen in the case of Rajkot how a ruler who was inclined to come to terms with his people was threatened with deposition, and how later he was made to break his word under pressure from British agents.

Thus the conflict in the states is only incidentally with the rulers. In effect it is with British imperialism. That is the issue, clear and definite. And that is why the interference of the British power in the states against the people has a special significance. We see this interference on an increasing scale, not only by the political department of the Government of India and its many agents and residents, but through its armed forces, as in Orissa. This interference in order to crush the popular movements is no longer going to be tolerated by us. The National Congress will certainly intervene with full vigour if the Government of India intervene to crush the people. Our methods are different; they are peaceful, but they have been shown in the past to be effective.

Gandhiji has repeatedly warned the British Government and its agents in India of the far-reaching consequences of this conflict. It is manifestly impossible for the conflict to be confined to particular states and for the Congress, at the same time, to carry on provincial administrations involving a measure of cooperation with the British authorities. If there is this major conflict then its effects will spread to the remotest corners of India, and the question will no longer be a limited one of this state or that, but of the complete elimination of British power.

What is the nature of the conflict today? This must be clearly understood. It varies slightly from state to state, but the demand everywhere is for full responsible government. Yet the conflict is not at present to enforce that demand, but to establish the right of organising people for that demand. When this right is denied and civil liberties are crushed, no way is left open to the people to carry on what are called constitutional methods of agitation. Their choice, then, is either to submit and give up all political and even public activity, and to suffer a degradation of the spirit and a continuation of the tyranny that oppresses them, or to resort to direct action. This direct action, according to our code, is perfectly peaceful satyagraha and a refusal to submit to violence and evil, whatever the consequences. The immediate issue today is thus one of civil liberties in most of the states, though the objective everywhere is responsible government. In Jaipur the issue is, in a sense, still more limited, for the state government objects to the praja mandal organising famine relief.

Members of the British Government, in justifying their international policy, tell us frequently of their love of peace and their horror of the methods of force and violence in the solution of international or national problems. In the name of peace and appeasement they have helped and encouraged international blackmail and gangsterism of the worst type and done mortal injury to democracy and freedom in Europe. By their policy they have enthroned the rule of unabashed violence in Europe and been parties to the greatest tragedy of our time—the defeat of the republic of Spain, which has fought so magnificently and so long against overwhelming odds. Yet these statesmen of Britain talk of the virtues of peaceful settlement and of the wickedness of force and violence. These pious sentiments are applied by them in Europe so that the forces of reaction and violence might have a free field and an ample opportunity to crush freedom.

What do we see in India, and especially in the states? All attempts by us at peaceful propaganda, peaceful organisation, peaceful settlement are met by the brutal violence of the states' authorities, backed by the armed might and political influence of the British power. Thus where changes are sought, howsoever legitimately and peacefully, in the direction of democracy and freedom, all such attempts must be put down ruthlessly and with violence. But where changes are desired by fascism and imperialism in their own interests and in order to crush democracy and freedom, then violence and force are allowed full play, and the policy of peace is only meant to obstruct and hinder those who want to preserve their liberties.

Does anyone still hold that tyranny and autocracy and corrupt administration must continue in the states? Does anyone deny that all these must go and give place to free institutions? If so, how is this change to be brought about normally unless full opportunities are given for peaceful organisation and the development of an intelligent and self-reliant public opinion? The full establishment of civil liberties is an essential preliminary to any progress. It is an insult to India to ask her to tolerate in the states ordinance rule and the suppression of organisations and prevention of public gatherings and methods usually associated with the gangster. Are the states to remain vast prisons where the human spirit is sought to be extinguished and the resources of the people are to be used for the pageantry and luxury of courts, while the masses starve and remain illiterate and backward? Are the middle ages to continue in India under the protection of British imperialism?

In an important state in Rajputana even typewriters are discouraged, and there is an ordinance dealing with them and requiring their registration. In Kashmir a monstrous ordinance, framed on the lines of the



ordinance promulgated for the Burma rebellion<sup>3</sup> some years ago, is the permanent law of the state. In the premier state of Hyderabad civil liberty has long been non-existent, and latterly accounts of brutal ill-treatment of peaceful satyagrahis have seen the light of day. The recent expulsion of hundreds of students from the Osmania University for the offence of singing *Bande Mataram* privately is an astounding instance of the reactionary mentality which prevails in the governing circles of Hyderabad. In Travancore the memory of the outrages of last summer is still fresh in our minds.<sup>4</sup>

But I do not wish to make a list of these states and their misdeeds, nor do I wish to discuss the problems of individual states. If I attempted to do so this address of mine would never end. Here, where we meet, the Punjab states lie close to us, and many of them have had an unsavoury reputation. Their tale of misgovernment, if we heard it fully, would fill our time. But, apart from the difficulties of time and space, I would prefer that you concentrated your attention on the wider problem which embraces all the states, which is in effect the Indian states' problem, rather than lose ourselves in the mazes of each separate problem. We must see the wood and not get lost in the trees. We must realise, and we must make others realise, that it is no longer possible to deal piecemeal with this great problem, for the freedom of India is one and indivisible.

But some states are in the forefront today in the struggle and they must be referred to. Some are peculiarly situated and require consideration.

Rajkot and Jaipur occupy the stage today and both of them raise issues of all-India importance. Many of our comrades are there, engaged in the heat of the struggle, and have been unable to join us in this conference because of that more important engagement. Rajkot has many lessons to teach us. After some months of conflict, it seemed that the people had won and we rejoiced. We saw how effectively the technique of our struggle and the peaceful and heroic sacrifice of the people brought success to us. But we had rejoiced too soon, and the plighted word of the ruler was broken and the struggle had to begin afresh. All India knows how this happened and how British authority by pressure and threats came in the way of a settlement. From this we learn that we must never be misled by temporary success, we can never

3. The Burma Emergency Powers Ordinance of August 1931 empowered the government to arrest any person without warrant and confiscate private property.

4. See *Selected Works*, Vol. 8, pp. 529-530.

be sure of the triumph of our cause, till achievement has come. Promises and assurances will not be kept, for the real power does not rest with those who make the promise. It rests with British imperialism. In Jaipur there is an English official who, though appointed prime minister by the maharaja, is the real ruler of the state, and rules on behalf of and probably under the instructions of the political department of the Government of India. No one imagines that the youthful maharaja has any important say in vital matters. No one supposes that the English prime minister could function as such for a day without the goodwill and support of the Government of India. The slightest disapproval of his policy by the political department would result in the immediate change of that policy or in his removal from his office.

In Orissa the regrettable murder of the British agent, Major Bazalgette, has led—as such acts even when committed in a moment of folly always lead—to unfortunate consequences. The people of the Orissa states are backward and have to suffer for their lack of understanding of our basic principles. This act is a warning to us to conduct our movement in such a manner that the people realise its significance and adhere strictly to its policy of nonviolence. For them to forget this is to injure their own cause.

The reaction of the British power to the tragedy of Ranpur was significant. Armed forces were brought from distant parts of India and a large concentration of troops in Orissa proclaimed the might of the paramount power. What were these troops supposed to do? There was no rebellion, no violent aggression. The starving peasantry fled at their approach and the state of Ranpur became an uninhabited wilderness. It is said that some trouble was feared from the backward jungle tribes, the Gonds. Was the British army in such numbers required to face the bows and arrows of these poor backward countrymen of ours? But the Gonds have done nothing and will not do anything aggressive unless they are goaded by intolerable misery. They have to be met gently and their grievances removed. But the way of imperialism is different.

It was not the possibility of any action by the Gonds that brought the armed hosts to Orissa. The troops came to overawe the peasantry of the states and to strengthen the rulers in opposing their demands. They were utilised to suppress the movement for freedom. This was an intervention of the most flagrant kind on behalf of the paramount power on the side of tyranny and corrupt administrations. Everyone knows that some of the states in Orissa are the worst and most degraded of their kind in India.

Quite apart from Ranpur and long before the murder of Major Bazalgette there, the tyrannical administrations of Dhenkanal and Talchar



had oppressed their people to such an extent that a great exodus had taken place from these states. From twenty to thirty thousand persons had crossed the boundaries of the states and entered the province of Orissa. A demand came from the rulers for the extradition from the province to the states of the leaders of this exodus, so that they might be made to suffer for their opposition to the state administrations. This demand was supported by the British authority. It was a demand which no Congress ministry could agree to without losing honour and betraying our comrades in the states and being false to our principles.

We do not wish to shield anyone who is guilty. We are perfectly prepared for a full inquiry. But the inquiry that is needed is an inquiry into the offences and maladministration and oppression of the Dhenkanal and Talchar state governments. It is these states' authorities that should be tried for the sorrow and misery that they have brought on their people.

The governments of the major states have been apt pupils in some ways of British imperialism. Among other things they have learnt the art of utilising communal differences to check popular movements. In Travancore a powerful people's movement is opposed and sought to be discredited on the plea that it is a communal movement, consisting mainly of Christians; in Kashmir the popular movement is called communal because it is largely Muslim in composition; in Hyderabad it is said to be communal because it is predominantly Hindu. The demands put forward on behalf of these several movements might be, as they indeed are, wholly national with no communal tinge or bias in them, but some excuse has to be found to discredit and oppose them and the plea of communalism is a useful one.

Hyderabad and Kashmir are the two premier states in India and we might have hoped that they would set an example to the other states by introducing free institutions and responsible government. Unhappily both are exceedingly backward politically and socially. Hyderabad is a predominantly Hindu state with a Muslim ruling class; Kashmir is predominantly a Muslim state with a Hindu ruling class. Both thus present the same type of problem, and both have the same background of extreme poverty among the masses, illiteracy, industrial backwardness and undeveloped resources. In painful contrast with this general poverty and wretchedness, the rulers of both are probably the two richest individuals in India. Kashmir is slightly more advanced politically as it has a kind of legislative assembly, but this has little power, and the ordinances that obtain there are monstrous in their severity. In Hyderabad we have probably the lowest level of civil liberty in India, and latterly attention has been drawn to the prohibition of even certain religious ceremonies.

nies. This low level in Hyderabad is not the reaction to any aggressive movement but has been for long the normal state of affairs.

It is distressing that in these two great states such conditions should prevail. It was natural that in both of them popular movements should grow up and spread to the masses. This took place in Kashmir first and later in Hyderabad. It was inevitable that such movements should affect the great majority of the population—the Muslims in Kashmir and the Hindus in Hyderabad. If, under the circumstances, they showed a certain communal tinge to begin with, it was not surprising. Even so, they did not cease to be popular movements representing the urge of the masses and their objective was a national one which would bring relief and progress to all. To condemn them as communal movements was to blind oneself deliberately to the facts, and for the minority groups in either state to lend colour to this condemnation was to injure their own cause. For this meant that the minority was opposed to freedom and progress and clung on to some petty special privileges which, it was thought, the present regime gave it.

As a matter of fact the two movements progressively developed on national lines, and in Kashmir, I am glad to say, a number of wise and far-seeing Hindus and Sikhs threw their weight on the side of the popular movement and supported the national demand which asked for responsible government. I am sure that in Hyderabad many far-seeing Muslims will do likewise. The leaders of these movements in both the states realise the extreme importance of steering clear of communalism and have tried to do so. They must not weaken at any moment in this or else they will injure their cause. The minorities must also realise that it is inevitable that responsible government will come to the states, and freedom will bring rich gifts for them as much as for the others. To oppose this struggle of the people or to be passive spectators in it is to prove unworthy of and false to the future that beckons to us all.

Because Hyderabad and Kashmir have essentially the same problem, though it has a different complexion in each, it should not be difficult to consider the two together and to offer the same solution, in so far as minority rights are concerned. That solution should be in keeping with the broad principles laid down by the Congress and must fit in with responsible government.

In Hyderabad a peculiar situation arose some time back which resulted in producing a certain confusion in the public mind. The state Congress was declared an illegal organisation although its activity was the perfectly peaceful and constitutional one of enrolling members and strengthening its organisation. But the state has been nurtured in the



traditions of the mediaeval age and even this was objected to and stopped. The state Congress thereupon justifiably refused to agree to this ban and attempted to carry on their activities. This involved peaceful satyagraha and hundreds suffered under it. About the same time or a little later a religious organisation and a communal organisation also started some kind of satyagraha. In the case of the religious organisation the reason was the banning by the state authorities of certain religious ceremonials and forms of worship which are commonly practised all over India. It is astonishing that the authorities should have taken this step which strikes at the root of religious liberty in India and goes counter to the professed principles of everyone. It was natural that this should cause resentment. But it was unfortunate that satyagraha should have been started on this basis at that time. This confused the issue and gave an excuse to the state authorities to put the demand for political freedom in the background.

After careful consideration of all the aspects of the situation the state Congress was advised to suspend its satyagraha so that the political issue might not be mixed up with communal and religious ones. The state Congress thereupon suspended their satyagraha. In spite of this the Hyderabad authorities had not the wisdom or the grace to release the satyagrahi prisoners or to remove their extraordinary ban on the organisation.

Unfortunately the communal and religious satyagraha was continued by the other organisations and the communal aspect of the question became intensified and conflicts took place in distant parts of India. Those responsible for it paid little heed to the consequences of their action, nor did they realise that a popular movement is an organic growth from below and cannot be artificially imposed from above. As a result of this the political movement for freedom has received a setback and the communal issue dominates the scene.

In Kashmir also the civil disobedience campaign was suspended last year to give a chance to the state authorities to retrace their steps and remedy some of the evils they had done. But they lack wisdom and grace also, and in spite of this suspension hundreds of civil disobedience prisoners, including the leader of the movement, Sheikh Muhamad Abdullah, continued in prison, and the infamous ordinance known as Notification 19-L as well as the Seditious Meetings Act of 1914 still function.

It is obvious that both in Kashmir and Hyderabad existing conditions cannot be put up with and if the state authorities continue to act in the manner they have so far done, a resumption of civil disobedience will become inevitable.

None of us wants conflict, but in this dissolving age conflict surrounds us at every step and the world rattles back to chaos and the rule of brutal violence. None of us wants this chaos in India for that is no prelude to freedom. Yet while we recognise that our strength grows, the forces of disruption and disintegration, of communalism and provincialism, of irresponsibility and narrow-mindedness also grow. We have to remember that British imperialism, though weakening at its centre, is still a formidable opponent and freedom will have to be purchased by many a struggle. Neither we nor anyone else in the world can view the future light-heartedly, for the present is full of sorrow and disaster, and the immediate future of the world is wrapped in gloom. Yet in India there are gleams of hope though dark clouds surround us. The brightest of these rays come from the newly awakened people of the states. We who presume to shoulder the burden of their struggle have a heavy responsibility, and it will require all our courage and our wisdom to discharge that faithfully. Strong language will not help us; it is often a sign of weakness and a substitute for action. It is action that is demanded today, wise and effective action which takes us speedily to our goal, controls the forces of disruption, and builds up the united India of our dreams.

Petty gains and advantages may lure us from time to time, but if they come in the way of the larger objective, they must be rejected and swept away. In the excitement of the moment we may feel inclined to forget our principles; if we surrender to this inclination, we do so at our peril. Our cause is a great one, so must our means be above reproach. We play for high stakes, let us be worthy of them. Great causes and little men go ill together.

The freedom of the people of the states is a big enough thing, yet it is part of the larger freedom of India, and till we gain that larger freedom, it is struggle for us. If the federation is imposed upon us, we shall fight it and sweep it away. Wherever the British power intervenes against the people in the states, we shall have to face it. The time approaches when the final solution has to come—the constituent assembly of all the Indian people framing the constitution of a free and democratic India.

The States People's Conference has done good work in the past, but this has been only a fraction of the work it might have done. It must now turn to the efficient organisation of all its activities, so that it might become a clearing house for all that pertains to the states, and a source of help and inspiration to all our comrades in the struggle. It must help in building up praja mandals or people's organisations in the states. It must take care to steer clear of all communalism, and it must, above



all, remember, and make others remember, that nonviolence is the basis of this struggle.

It is our great good fortune that in this struggle we have the backing of the National Congress and the support of its leaders. Most cheering of all is the thought that we have Gandhiji to guide us and inspire.

### 13. Police Firing in Orchha State<sup>1</sup>

For the authorities in the states to shoot and kill and belabour their subjects is becoming a common enough occurrence in India. But the news of the recent incidents near Mau Ranipur in Jhansi district where the police of Orchha state indulged in these normal state activities has a special significance.<sup>2</sup> It is reported that they crossed the border and entered Jhansi district and fired at people there. This is a very serious matter, and I trust that the U.P. Government will take suitable action.

It is also said that it is a common practice for Orchha troops and police to go from one part of their territory to another, crossing Jhansi district in the process. They have no business to do so except for peaceful purposes. If they declare war on the people of the state, they can expect no facilities from the U.P. Government. In this event, if troops or police cross the border they should be treated as foreign belligerent troops and disarmed and interned.

1. Statement to the press, Lucknow, 18 February 1939. *National Herald*, 19 February 1939.
2. Congressmen of Jhansi district were chased out of the state, lathi-charged and fired at on 16 February 1939 when they organised a protest meeting against the suppression of Congress activities and imposition of heavy land customs and forest taxes.

## 14. Repression in Orchha State<sup>1</sup>

I have just seen the statement issued by the political and judicial secretary of Orchha state.<sup>2</sup> The criticism I made previously was not made casually but after inquiry by four responsible persons who were specially asked by us to investigate the matter. Since then Mr. Bhagwat Narayan Bhargava, advocate of Jhansi, and others have, at the instance of the provincial Congress committee, conducted a detailed inquiry, examining many witnesses on the spot.

The conclusion they have arrived at is that the police of Orchha state did fire at various people beyond the border and in Jhansi district and caused injury to them. If this is correct then manifestly the Orchha authorities or their police have committed a grave breach which raises important questions of principle.

The political secretary of Orchha states that the Congress volunteers from the boundary villages in Jhansi have been making forced entries into the state with lathis and other weapons. No authorised Congress volunteers or other Congressmen have any business to do so as this is against Congress policy and practice. If any people have done so they have acted contrary to our instructions and we do not support them in any way.

The provincial Congress office has issued and is issuing again clear directions that no *jathas* or groups should cross the border in defiance of the orders of the state authorities and we shall do everything in our power to prevent even the indiscipline of individuals.

The political secretary talks of retaliation. The question was that the Orchha state troops or police should not enter Jhansi district for war-like purposes and if they do so, they should be disarmed.

Does Mr. Shukla intend to use the roads of Jhansi district for such purposes?

1. Statement to the press, Lucknow, 27 February 1939. *National Herald*, 28 February 1939.
2. On 27 February 1939, R.S. Shukla, political and judicial secretary of Orchha, denied that the state police had entered British territory and contended that Congress volunteers frequently entered the state and incited people not to pay rent. He also charged Congress volunteers with indulging in arson and loot.



## 15. Firing in Jaipur<sup>1</sup>

Over a month ago a tragedy took place in the city of Jaipur which has attracted less notice in India than it deserved. On January 27 as a result of firing by the armed police over twenty (some say thirty) persons were killed and a hundred or more were wounded. Conflict had arisen over a demand by the local Muslims for the widening of a staircase leading to a mosque. I am not concerned for the moment with the merits of this conflict but it is an undoubted fact that heavy firing took place resulting in great loss of life. In such cases the first duty of the state is to have an impartial inquiry but no such inquiry has been held so far.

About ten days ago Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and I requested Pandit Srikrishna Datt Paliwal, M.L.A., and Dr. Mohammad Ashraf to visit Jaipur and give us first-hand information of this matter. They were good enough to go and we are now in possession of their report.<sup>2</sup> This report, drawn up after a brief stay, cannot be considered a final report but it gives enough facts to warrant a searching inquiry. It was suggested that some eminent jurists might be sent to Jaipur to conduct such an inquiry and I telegraphed to the Prime Minister of Jaipur requesting his cooperation in the matter. From his reply I gather that he does not approve of any non-official inquiry.

It should be remembered that this conflict was not a clash between Hindus and Muslims. Indeed Hindus are said to have given shelter to large numbers of Muslims on the day of the firing and I believe help is being given now to the many sufferers. The need for this help is very great and I hope that the praja mandal, busy as it is, and others will give full assistance in this relief of suffering.

1. Statement to the press, Allahabad, 4 March 1939. *The Bombay Chronicle*, 6 March 1939.
2. The report said that the demand for widening the staircase of the Jama Masjid was resented and when a Muslim priest tried to give expression to this dissatisfaction after the Friday afternoon prayers on 27 January 1939, the gathering was fired upon and the victims treated badly.

## 16. Conditions in Kashmir State<sup>1</sup>

I have only just seen a *communiqué*<sup>2</sup> issued by the Jammu and Kashmir Government purporting to reply to certain remarks I made at Ludhiana. I had stated that notification 19-L was 'monstrous' and that it still functions. I am told it is not used in normal times and that it was not even used to put down serious communal disturbances. I entirely agree. It is not used for murderers, thieves, kidnappers, dacoits, brigands, cut-throats or other criminals and scoundrels who are tried by the ordinary law of the land. It has not been used for communal fanatics even when they stab and kill. But when political workers, desiring political change, raise their heads then it is used and has been barbarously used and presumably will be used, or else the Kashmir Government would not keep it on. A law functions so long as it is on the statute book. Notification 19-L is on the statute book and was used recently enough. The penal code provides for the punishment of hanging for murderers. It is not necessary for a continuous series of hangings to take place in order to demonstrate that the penal code is still functioning. I repeat that notification 19-L is a monstrous imposition. It is bad enough that a government should father such a monstrosity, it is worse that it should have the temerity to justify it.

The Kashmir Government states that the civil resisters had forfeited all public sympathy. I cannot obviously speak from personal knowledge. But I should have thought that recent events proved the contrary. Seven members of the assembly were arrested because of their association with the agitation for responsible government. This led to seven vacancies and seven bye-elections. In every one of these bye-elections the party of the civil resisters won. In any event if the Kashmir Government is so certain of public support why not remove notification 19-L and put an end to the Seditious Meetings Act? Why not have a plebiscite?

1. Statement to the press, Allahabad, 4 March 1939. *The Leader*, 7 March 1939.
2. The *communiqué* of 25 February 1939 contended that ordinances were never used in normal times and as soon as the emergency disappeared, even the limited enforcement of certain laws was given up.



17. To Harekrushna Mahtab<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
May 5, 1939

Dear Mahtabji,<sup>2</sup>

I wanted to speak to you about the Gangpur firing<sup>3</sup> but unfortunately we had no time in Calcutta. Since my return here I have discussed this matter with others, notably with a prominent Catholic man here. He was very keen that effort should be made for an inquiry to be held. I was told that many of the sufferers were Catholic converts among the backward tribes. Ultimately I decided to approach the Agent to the Governor General for permission to have such an inquiry. I sent the following telegram yesterday:

Agent to Governor General  
Orissa States  
Cuttack

Would be grateful if you will permit inquiry into Gangpur occurrences resulting in firing. Intend appoint Dr. D'Souza, retired judicial commissioner, Sind, Harekrushna Mahtab and Beltie Shah Gilani, ex-president, All India Catholic Conference. Would appreciate reply by telegram.

Jawaharlal Nehru  
President States People's Conference

I hope you do not mind my suggesting your name because your association seemed to me to be essential. I do not know if this permission will be given. It seems to me rather doubtful. If, however, permission is given, I hope you and the other persons named in the telegram will agree to act. I shall let you know as soon as I hear from the Agent.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. (b. 1899); joined the freedom struggle, 1921; Chief Minister of Orissa, 1946-50 and 1956-61; Union Minister of Industries and Commerce, 1950-52; Governor of Bombay, 1955-56.

3. Several persons were killed and many injured when police opened fire on 28 April 1939 to disperse the crowd which had collected to demonstrate against the arrest of some persons.

**18. To the Agent to the Governor General, Orissa States<sup>1</sup>**

Allahabad  
May 5, 1939

Dear Sir,

I sent you yesterday the following telegram :...<sup>2</sup>

Today the telegraph office has informed me that the telegram could not be delivered as the addressee had left the station without leaving his address behind. This was somewhat surprising intimation as I should have thought that your office functioned even in your absence and, in any event, that my message could be forwarded to you.

I trust that this letter will reach you either in Cuttack or in Calcutta and that you will be good enough to let me have your answer soon. I shall be grateful to you if you will permit the three gentlemen named in the telegram to visit the scene of occurrence and enquire into the circumstances.

Yours truly,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. Not printed. For the text of the telegram see the preceding item.

**19. Sarila State<sup>1</sup>**

The little state of Sarila in Bundelkhand has witnessed recently unusual happenings, though they are not unusual in these days of awakening in the states and repression by the authorities. We understand that there has been a demand on behalf of the people for a remission of the revenue which bears heavily on them. As usual elsewhere, the condition of the peasantry is very bad. The state is surrounded by Hamirpur district and consists of nine villages only.

1. Editorial written at Lucknow, 21 May 1939 and printed in *National Herald*, 24 May 1939.



On the 12th of this month some school boys took out a procession with the national flag. They were beaten and dispersed by the police. Thereupon on the 13th further processions were taken out by the men and women of Sarila. The agency police were drafted in and they began to beat mercilessly both the men and women and to terrorise the villagers. On the 14th specially a big procession of men and women was mercilessly attacked by the agency police and as a result several men and women were badly injured. It is reported that the police entered the houses of some people also and beat them there. Some leading people have apparently been deported as a result of all this. A number of residents of Sarila have left their villages and are in a pitiable condition.

We do not know how far this uncalled for and brutal repression was caused by the state authorities or by the agency police sent there. We understand that the chief responsibility lies with the agency police. The raja of Sarila is a young man from whom much was expected, and it is unfortunate that he should be involved in the deplorable occurrences. We trust that he will put an end to this attempt at terrorising the people and will make peace with them. The agency police have no business to go there to oppress the people. What is urgently needed is a gesture of goodwill from the raja to remove the evil impression of the past few days' occurrences and to assure the people that they can live peacefully. Full freedom should be given to them to present their demands peacefully and their ordinary civil rights should be acknowledged. The economic question affecting the peasantry must be tackled immediately and relief given to them. The question of reforming administration, making it popular and representative, should follow soon after. In a small state like Sarila the example of Aundh is specially applicable.

**20. To A. V. Thakkar<sup>1</sup>**

Allahabad  
May 30, 1939

Dear Mr. Thakkar,<sup>2</sup>

I have your letter of the 25th May.<sup>3</sup> I entirely agree with you that the state of affairs in the Orissa states is exceedingly distressing and deplorable. For many weeks past I have been agitated about the matter especially as I did not know how I could help. I knew that Gandhiji was taking a deep interest in the Orissa states and I hesitated to do anything which might come in the way of what he was doing.

Soon after the Gangpur firing I telegraphed to the resident for the eastern states suggesting an inquiry and even mentioned the names of three persons whom I intended to request to go there for the purpose. These three names were: Dr. D'Souza, retired judicial commissioner of Sind, Mr. Harekrushna Mahtab and Mr. B.S. Gilani, ex-president of the All India Catholic Conference. After long delay I heard from the resident to the effect that he did not consider such an inquiry necessary. I have written to him again on the subject and suggested that at least he might permit one of our representatives to go there and meet the people and help them.<sup>4</sup>

I entirely agree with you that Talchar and Gangpur are scandalous instances deserving of the fullest inquiry and action on our part. It is easy enough for me or anyone else to issue a statement on the subject but I was keen on doing something more. If you can suggest something effective I shall be grateful to you.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. (1869-1951); Congressman of Gujarat; a prominent Harijan welfare worker and social reformer; member, Constituent Assembly, 1946-50.

3. He drew Jawaharlal's attention to the sufferings of the refugees in Talchar and the firing in Gangpur.

4. Letter not printed.



## 21. Conditions in Indian States<sup>1</sup>

Wrapped up as we are in a hundred problems and in manifold difficulties, do we overlook the tragedy that is being enacted from day to day in scores of Indian states? Yet there is no problem more vital for us, no tragedy more painful than this.

Rajkot has attracted a great deal of attention, and rightly so for Gandhiji was associated with it. It has somewhat overshadowed other states' struggles for a while. But we must remember that Seth Jamnalal Bajaj is still a prisoner in Jaipur, that in Bharatpur, satyagraha is going on, and in large numbers of states fierce repression is in progress.

Gandhiji made a generous gesture of goodwill by advising a suspension of satyagraha in the states and his advice was followed by the people. Not so by the authorities in the states, who, mistaking the gesture perhaps for weakness, have intensified their repressive policy. Political agents and residents carry on in a leisurely way as if it mattered little or nothing at all. How many scores of thousands of refugees were starving or how many others were being crushed by coercion! They made vague promises which they interpret in their own way. But the cup of sorrow and suffering is overfull and those who imagine that conditions are static will be painfully disillusioned.

Among all the states in India the Orissa states stand out today in their agony—Talchar of broken promises and wandering, starving refugees and Gangpur where large numbers were done to death and others driven to the jungles. It is astonishing that all this should happen and there should not even be a proper inquiry. I suggested an inquiry into the Gangpur firing by three very competent persons but the reply was 'no', because some private and departmental inquiry had already taken place. No one knows exactly what happened and all manner of horrible tales reach one's ears. How long will this intolerable burden and tyranny continue?

No one in India can forget the sufferings of these poor backward countrymen of ours, doubly oppressed by feudalism and imperialism. No one dare say that their freedom can wait till we are free. There is no freedom for us or for anyone in India so long as insolent and irresponsible power crushes the people of the states.

1. Statement to the press, Allahabad, 30 May 1939. *National Herald*, 31 May 1939.

## 22. To G. M. Bakshi<sup>1</sup>

Bombay  
June 2, 1939

My dear Bakshiji,<sup>2</sup>

I have your letter of the 24th May.<sup>3</sup> As far as I remember I replied to your previous letter and I certainly sent a reply to Sheikh Sahab. The information you had sent about the repression in Kashmir was sent on by our research bureau to the press and duly published. The research bureau is not supposed to issue comments as a rule and allows facts to speak for themselves. That is the right and dignified attitude for a research bureau. It was possible for me to issue a statement but, as I wrote to Sheikh Sahab, I was in a peculiar difficulty owing to various reasons and felt in no mood to issue statements of any kind. As you know what is happening in Kashmir is happening in a host of other states. Everywhere repression is in full swing and it is becoming urgently necessary for us to consider the whole situation. I dislike the idea of just protesting in a statement. At the same time I did not want to say anything which might conflict with Gandhiji's policy in regard to the states.

I can well appreciate what you tell me is happening in Kashmir. Exactly the same kind of thing is happening in many other places. It is very irritating and yet it is an inevitable development which need not worry us greatly. Such things are signs of a growing national movement which frightens the government.

I think that the advice Sheikh Sahab has given you, not to defy the ban placed on you till the session of the National Conference<sup>4</sup> is over, is a sound advice. It is a hard pill to swallow but in the larger interest of the movement it is not worthwhile for you to defy the order at this stage.

It is proposed to have a meeting of the constitution committee of the States People's Conference here in Bombay about the 17th June. I

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. (1919-1971); member, Kashmir National Conference; member, Jammu and Kashmir Assembly, 1951-67; Prime Minister, Jammu and Kashmir, 1953-63; member, Lok Sabha, 1967-71.

3. He wrote about repression in Kashmir.

4. In June 1939, the All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference changed its name to All Jammu and Kashmir National Conference. Its aim was achievement of representative government.



hope that Sheikh Sahab will be able to come, though the distance is great.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

### **23. Greetings to the Kashmir National Conference<sup>1</sup>**

I send greetings to your conference and trust that it will base itself on nationalism and help in bringing freedom to all people in Kashmir.

1. Telegram to Sheikh Muhamad Abdullah, Bombay, 8 June 1939. All India States People's Conference File, 1939, p. 3, N.M.M.L.

### **24. The Demand of Responsible Government<sup>1</sup>**

In my opinion the lowering of demands should never mean giving up the demands. I will not mind postponing the demand of responsible government for the time being, but the postponement should be only for a short period. In my opinion, that period should not exceed two or three years. If we postpone this demand for the time being, then we should struggle more for the fulfilment of the preliminary demands of civil liberty, and of the right of organising the people, so that they may be able to run a responsible government.

Whether the workers on whom the notices have been served should be present before the court, I cannot give any definite answer as I am not in a position to know the local conditions clearly. However, I shall

1. Report of a talk with representatives of the Kolhapur Praja Parishad, Bombay, 11 June 1939. From *The Hindustan Times*, 13 June 1939.

study the matters presented before me in detail. The lull and despondency which is now in evidence in the states' movement is only a passing phase. There is, however, a need to work with vigour and create enthusiasm among the people during this period.

## 25. To Jaipal Singh<sup>1</sup>

Bombay  
June 21, 1939

Dear Mr. Jaipal Singh,<sup>2</sup>

I have your letter of the 14th June.<sup>3</sup> The Gangpur tragedy was a horrible affair and one of the worst that we have had. The very least that should have been done was to have an impartial inquiry. As president of the All India States People's Conference, I intended appointing a commission of inquiry and even suggested the names of the eminent persons. I communicated with the Agent or resident who refused to give permission for it to go to Gangpur. I have had a long correspondence with the Agent. Then I suggested that at least we should be allowed to send one representative to help the sufferers. Even this was refused.

I do not know what the Congress will do or can do under the present circumstances. All I can do is to write in the public press.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. All India States People's Conference File, 1939, pp. 4-5, N.M.M.L.

2. (1903-1970); tribal leader and sportsman; member, Lok Sabha, 1952-70.

3. In his letter of 14 June 1939, Jaipal Singh had drawn Jawaharlal's attention to the firing in Gangpur.



## 26. Gangsterism in Limbdi<sup>1</sup>

Limbdi has become symbolic of a new technique on the part of some of the rulers.<sup>2</sup> It is a technique which is spreading in Kathiawar and elsewhere. This is a technique of the states encouraging gangsterism, dacoity, and brutal violence by private individuals or hirelings on the people who are engaged in the states people's struggle. This behaviour is bad enough at any time or anywhere. Where it occurs, it is a sure sign of the utter incompetence and bankruptcy of the state authorities. Where a state cannot stop this, it has ceased to function and has lost all claim to the cooperation or allegiance of its people.

But what shall we say to the state which itself encourages this disgusting brutality and goondaism? What shall we say of Limbdi which has exhibited this?

We have much to say and words are feeble vehicles for our thoughts. But we shall say it in other and more effective ways when the time comes. Let no man imagine that violence and gangsterism will suppress a people's movement.

I send my greetings to the people of Limbdi, and I want to assure them and all the people of the states that in spite of the present-day sorrow and distress, the future is theirs, and for that future, we have to work, and will work with all determination and confidence.

1. Message to the people of Limbdi, Bombay, 22 June 1939. *The Bombay Chronicle*, 24 June 1939.
2. On 19 February 1939, organised attacks, inspired by the state authorities, were made on the office of the praja mandal and the houses of the workers.

## 27. Facts about the Indian States<sup>1</sup>

The problem of the Indian states has come to the forefront in Indian politics and it is everywhere recognised that an urgent solution of it is necessary. It is not only the problem of 582 political units in India but

1. Foreword to the series of pamphlets issued by the All India States People's Conference, Bombay, June 1939. J.N. Papers, N.M.M.L.

of scores of millions of people who inhabit these areas, and the human side of it, though often forgotten, is the most important. The Congress has repeatedly affirmed, and there can be no denial of this, that the states are inseparable parts of India and their fate is bound up with the fate of India as a whole. From the point of view of the Indian struggle for freedom therefore, apart from other reasons, the states cannot be ignored.

There is today a great deal of argument about the states and the newspapers are full of accounts of popular movements and official repression. It is well known that politically and economically the states are very backward and many of them are still in the feudal age. A great part of their revenues goes to support the princely houses that rule over them and only a small fraction is spent on the advancement of the people. All this is known vaguely but of detailed knowledge and accurate information there is a singular lack. All of us have heard of the score or so of well-known states but we are completely ignorant of the hundreds of others. What are they? Where are they? What happens within their borders? A thick veil covers them and even prying eyes may not peep in. These states themselves dislike publicity and discourage visitors, except those superior persons who go occasionally to join in vast organised slaughter of inoffensive animals.

If we are to consider the problem of the states scientifically and methodically, we must have facts and data. Mere sentiment is not enough. What are the states? What are their populations, areas, and revenues? How did they begin, and what are these treaties which have suddenly become so important? How many treaty states are there, and what of the others? What are the administrations like, and where does the money go? These and like questions arise and we can only answer them by collecting facts.

The purpose of this series of pamphlets, issued by the research department of the All India States People's Conference, is to place such facts before the public. There is nothing new about the facts, but so far they have been buried in official reports and other somewhat inaccessible books. It is hoped that this simple presentation will be found helpful in understanding the fundamentals of the problem. Argument can then proceed on a sounder basis.

The first pamphlet deals with the populations, areas and revenues of the states. This simple information, as the reader will discover, is itself extraordinarily revealing. Other pamphlets will follow.



28. To V.K. Krishna Menon<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
July 1, 1939

My dear Krishna,

I returned last night from Bombay after just a month's absence. I shall be here only for a few days before I go to Ceylon, that is if war breaking out does not upset my programme. Last night the *National Herald* people from Lucknow telephoned to me your long message to them. It was ominous. We shall await developments. If war comes, probably there will be an immediate meeting of the Working Committee and I shall attend it. The Government of India Act Amending Bill, I suppose, is not going to be passed just yet.

There is one matter about which I have been specially asked to write to you. With war imminent, it seems rather unimportant. Still, I must keep my promise, and it has certain importance of its own. This relates to Hyderabad state, which, as you know, is terribly backward and feudal. Unfortunately it has got the goodwill of the Muslims generally in India because it is a big Muslim state and gives employment to the Muslim middle class. It keeps the moulvīs on its side by paying them monthly allowances and giving grants for mosques, etc. Recently it gave a lac of rupees to the Hindu University. Behind this apparent generosity is the dead hand of feudalism. A political movement was developing there last year and civil disobedience was started. Immediately the state called it a communal movement and tried to crush it as such. Unfortunately the Hindu Sabha taking advantage of the situation started satyagraha on their own account, thus making it easy for the state to lay stress on the communal character of the political movement. Inevitably such a movement is predominantly Hindu there, as 85 per cent of the population is Hindu. The services are almost entirely Muslim in the upper ranks and the Muslims are led to believe that they are the ruling race. Owing to the communal situation in India, we advised the political leaders of the state not to get mixed up with the Hindu Sabha or Arya Samaj satyagrahas. We tried hard to get the two latter withdrawn so as to leave the field clear for the political issue. But we did not succeed. Then we advised the political movement to be suspended to prevent it from becoming entangled with the communal one. This was suspended.

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

The Hindu Sabha and the Arya Samaj however continued their satyagraha. The former does not count but the latter assumed all-India proportions. The satyagraha was carried on as a protest against religious disabilities imposed on the Hindus generally and specially on the Arya Samajists. There is no doubt that there are these disabilities and the Arya Samaj have a good case, though they would have done better if they had not indulged in satyagraha. Their answer is that for the last five years they have done their utmost to get the disabilities removed without any result.

Thus the Arya Samaj satyagraha has been going on for many months now and about 12,000 persons are in prison. Those in prison have been treated very badly and all kinds of stories of atrocities have come to us.

Our general attitude has been of disapproval of the satyagraha but of sympathy with the grievances of the Arya Samajists and of course of condemnation of the jail atrocities. We have, however, to be cautious about this matter as it has definitely become a communal issue. I have been asked if it is possible to get something done at the English end in regard to this, such as questions in Parliament or other kinds of publicity.<sup>2</sup> This publicity would include of course the general backwardness of Hyderabad state and the utter lack of civil liberty there. I have referred these people to you and probably you will hear from them directly. If any expenditure is involved in this they are prepared to pay a reasonable sum per month. Perhaps you could suggest some competent person to them to deal with.

Yours,  
Jawaharlal

2. Krishna Menon replied on 13 July 1939: "the matter has already been messed up at this end. Hitherto on questions concerning the Indian states parties with money have come here and placed themselves in the hands of people who have made use of them. Till now it has been mostly to advance the cause of a prince. The states people have also been at times exploited." He added that the question was further complicated by giving it a communal aspect.



## 29. The Future of the People in the States<sup>1</sup>

The Indian states have to face today a very difficult situation and each state has its own problems. Recent developments have somewhat disheartened many of our comrades in the states. But there is no sufficient reason for this. In all great struggles there are bound to be ups and downs. It is only gradually that training and experience come to large numbers of people. We are going through a period of hard training through the impact of events. Let the people of the states profit by this and prepare themselves for the future.

The statement issued by the standing committee surveys the whole problem and endeavours to give a lead to the people of the states. They have undertaken a great risk and they must prove themselves worthy of it. Today may be full of difficulty but tomorrow is surely theirs and for that tomorrow they must prepare.

1. Message to *The States' People*, Bombay, 13 July 1939. *National Herald*, 14 July 1939.

## 30. Feudalism in Hyderabad<sup>1</sup>

Though the grievances of the subjects in all the different states are not the same, the fundamental system of administration is similar, and naturally the States People's Conference has to go deep into the feudal and semi-feudal system of administration which is generally found prevalent in almost all the states.

Unfortunately, this important aspect which is common to one and all the states has not been receiving sufficient attention at the hands of the states people's workers in different states. Their attention is generally drawn towards lesser grievances. The States People's Conference

1. Interview to the press, Secunderabad, 15 July 1939. From *The Hindustan Times*, 16 July 1939.

organisation has very recently established a research bureau to collect sufficient information and data relating to various Indian states to evolve a common policy which can be a sort of guide to the people of all the states.

As regards the attitude which the state Congress should adopt if the Nizam's government is not going to include grant of responsible government in its future reforms scheme, I cannot say anything about this unless I have full particulars with me. Much will depend upon the strength of the local Congress organisation, and there are several indeterminable factors which have to be taken into consideration before any action is taken. The Hyderabad State Congress should not surrender its ideals, but I would not mind if the name of the organisation is changed.



## THE CONGRESS ORGANISATION





## 1. Bogus Membership<sup>1</sup>

The resolution of the Working Committee on Congress membership is of the utmost importance.<sup>2</sup> If we are to face the great struggle ahead of us, we cannot do so unless we are a disciplined, well-knit organisation, conscious of our purpose and intent on achieving it. A large membership is welcome but bogus and unreal members weaken our organisation. Therefore we must purge ourselves of them.

This is not a question of pushing forward one policy or another but laying a secure foundation for any effective policy. We may pass some resolutions by temporary majorities but when it comes to action, only real members count. We must, therefore, prepare for action so that in this disordered and ever-shifting world, India may stand strong and prepared for all eventualities.

Our outlook also must undergo a change. We are no longer a crowd of people, who shout, condemn and bemoan our lot. We shall condemn, of course, where condemnation is necessary, but we have to speak with dignity and authority as becomes our great organisation and the future of India, that beckons so insistently to us.

I trust, therefore, that all Congress committees will cooperate wholeheartedly with this resolution of the Working Committee and purge the Congress of the unreal elements. I am glad that, in this matter, the United Provinces Congress Committee had already given a lead<sup>3</sup> and the Working Committee has welcomed this and largely adopted the lines laid down by the United Provinces.

1. Statement to the press, Wardha, 16 December 1938. *The Hindu*, 17 December 1938.
2. Complaints were received by the Working Committee from various parts of the country about Congress committees maintaining membership registers containing fictitious names. The Working Committee asked the provincial Congress committees to scrutinise all membership registers by 31 March 1939 and rectify errors in membership.
3. To eliminate fictitious membership, the U.P.P.C.C. had introduced a register of voters other than a register of four-anna members and the voters were required to present themselves at the Congress office for registration.

## 2. The United Provinces Congress<sup>1</sup>

The resignation of the provincial Congress executive<sup>2</sup> at Ayodhya received a considerable measure of publicity in the press. This was natural, and yet perhaps the significance of it was hardly realised by most people. It did not obviously represent a split in the provincial Congress, nor did it take place because of ideological differences. There are various groups in the P.C.C., some with an ideological background, some unhappily based on personalities. But no party or group was involved in this resignation. The question at issue was an important one but not a vital one, and no question of principle was at stake. Ordinarily there would have been no resignation.

Why then was this resignation offered? Because the council felt that in the interests of the Congress the time had come when our proceedings should be conducted with a full appreciation of reality and responsibility. The Congress has been for these many years an agitational organisation and it has inevitably developed this background. The demand of a purely agitational organisation is for things it wants, and sufficient attention is not always paid to the manner of getting them or to their fitting in with other demands.

Gandhiji, however, brought an element of reality to the Congress nineteen years ago and we were progressively made to think in terms of action rather than of words and demands. When action was to follow we had to be careful of our words. A measure of responsibility was thus thrust upon us.

The Congress grew in power and its influence extended to millions. By a decision it could shake up the whole country, launch civil disobedience, or start a no-tax campaign. This was a terrible responsibility for those who had to shoulder it. For fear of shouldering such a responsibility some organisations or people give up all thought of effective action and confine themselves to vague and high-sounding words. They become static and divorced from reality. The Congress could not possibly do that; it had to be dynamic if it was to fulfil its historic mission. It continued to function effectively on the plane of action, but it did so

1. Allahabad, 6 January 1939. *National Herald*, 10-11 January 1939. Reprinted in *The Unity of India*, (London, 1941), pp. 136-143.

2. The executive council of the U.P.P.C.C. resigned on 29 December 1938 following the decision of the P.C.C. that members of legislatures were to be debarred from membership of Congress committees.



with a full sense of responsibility. It tried to coordinate its dynamic character with the responsibility which its strength and vast influence thrust upon it.

With the coming of the Congress ministries new problems arose; some of them are of a kind to which the Congress was not accustomed. There was danger of its playing second fiddle to the ministries, of losing its revolutionary approach to national problems, and accommodating itself to the *status quo*. There was an equal danger, on the other side, of a continuous agitational interference with the provincial governments, resulting in a total inability of those governments to keep pace with the demands made upon it. A growing discordance would have taken place and the governments could not have survived, even when there was no deliberate intention of ending them. The only proper course for the Congress was to retain its dynamic character and its revolutionary approach, and yet at the same time to function with full responsibility so as to avoid discordance. The Congress governments had on their part to bear in mind the real objectives of the Congress and to do everything in their power to work in line with the organisation outside.

Right at the beginning, when the Congress ministries were formed, the Working Committee took care to clarify this position. They laid stress on the great importance of work outside the legislatures, and desired the full cooperation of the Congress governments and parties in the legislatures with the provincial Congress committees. They appointed a parliamentary sub-committee to coordinate our activities and supervise parliamentary work.

We have had eighteen months of this now and the mere fact that we have functioned with a measure of success is evidence that we have been adapting ourselves to the new conditions. That adaptation has not been complete nor has the success been as heartening as some of us had hoped. But considering all the circumstances and the inherent difficulties of the problem, we have done fairly well and laid the foundations of greater success.

But while that full success still lingers, difficulties encompass us. They do not frighten us for we have accustomed ourselves to crisis and difficulty and we shall face them in the present and in the future, as we have done in the past, with a stout heart and with courage and responsibility. The fact that there are many newcomers within the Congress fold, some attracted by the lure of advancement, makes it all the more incumbent on us to hold fast to our anchor. We shall only do that if we remember our basic principles, and consider everything with a full sense of responsibility and a realisation of the consequences of our words and deeds. We dare not speak or act irresponsibly. Those who decide on a course

of action must shoulder the burden of carrying it out or else the power to decide and the power to give effect to that decision will be divorced from each other, and this will result in disintegration and chaos.

It was this fundamental problem that was before the provincial executive council when it decided to offer its resignation. This problem will ever be with us and our future progress depends on our solving it satisfactorily.

Let us remember what the Congress is today, what privileges it has, what responsibilities accompany them. Those privileges will fade away if we are forgetful of our responsibilities. We have to view each problem in its larger setting, so that one false step in a particular direction might not upset the balance of our struggle. Ours is an organic movement, as all vital movements are, and our advance forward must be a planned advance keeping all the factors in view.

It is in this light that we have to consider each one of our problems—independence, Indian states, kisans, workers, industry, minorities. It is from this viewpoint that we must build up our Congress organisation.

## II

The Congress has within its fold many groups, widely differing in their viewpoints and ideologies. This is natural and inevitable if the Congress is to be the mirror of the nation. But the Congress would cease to be an organisation and a movement if there was not a common purpose and a common discipline binding together these varying groups and millions of individuals. That common purpose has been from the early days political freedom, and to that we have added progressively economic and social freedom. But while there is unanimity about the former, there is disagreement about the content of the latter, though the principle has been fully accepted. And because of this disagreement tension arises and different methods are pursued. Yet it is clear that we must not permit this tension to increase to the point of endangering the common purpose of the movement. As has been repeatedly stated, the basic problem of India today is the integration of the political and the social movements. Without that neither can go ahead and each will founder. Those who in the enthusiasm of the moment forget this injure their own as well as the wider cause.

People will differ, of course, and should differ in a vital movement. It is not difference of views that I have in mind at present, but the fact that every such viewpoint must be held and expressed with full responsibility and acceptance of the consequences of giving effect to it. It must be considered in relation to the totality of circumstances.



The Congress organisation has grown to vast dimensions, and, because of this, greater responsibilities have been cast upon us. We can legitimately take pride in our achievement, but we dare not grow self-complacent. It should be our function, even more than that of our opponents, to criticise ourselves and to probe out our weaknesses and seek to remove them. It is with this purpose in view that the Working Committee has laid great stress on purifying our organisation.

Our provincial Congress committee has not waited for instructions from the Working Committee in this matter. We have, for a year or more, given earnest consideration to it and have already made many changes in our constitution in order to make our organisation more efficient and to root out any element of corruption from it. Last year we established a kind of Congress civil service consisting of persons who were pledged to keep away from election to any Congress committee. They were to be our permanent staff of office secretaries, inspectors, organisers, and auditors, above party strife, and carrying on all routine activities with efficiency and impartiality. Every district and city committee, and of course the provincial committee, was enjoined to keep them and we have, I believe, nearly forty members of this national service now. This in itself has resulted in greater efficiency and to some extent in keeping out party activities from the routine work of our various offices.

Other changes followed. The vital change of having a register of voters other than a register of four-anna members. Only such of the latter as take the trouble to go personally to the Congress office to register themselves can vote. This procedure not only helps in eliminating bogus and fictitious members, but also increases the political consciousness of the people. Qualifications for members of all executives were also raised and, in particular, regular national work was made compulsory for them. We have also constituted a provincial election tribunal,<sup>3</sup> thus separating, to a large extent, the judicial and executive functions within the organisation. These are some of the major changes made and we shall watch with interest how they work. It may be that further changes are necessary in order to tighten up our organisation and make it a more efficient fighting instrument in the cause of Indian freedom.

3. The P.C.C. elected every year a provincial election tribunal which in turn appointed district tribunals as provided under the Congress constitution. The provincial tribunal received appeals from district tribunals relating to disputes about enrolment and elections. The Congress Working Committee could receive appeals from the provincial tribunals.

The lead that the United Provinces gave was approved of by the Working Committee and other provinces have been asked to follow it. This is gratifying for us, but it means also that we must make every effort to keep up to the mark. This can only be done with the willing cooperation of our members and workers. The past year's work, in spite of many difficulties and novel situations, was a record of successful achievement. The test of this is not the membership of fourteen and a half lakhs, gratifying as that is, but the efficiency of our provincial and other offices and the discipline of our organisation. Our provincial office has grown and the president and secretaries and others connected with it deserve commendation for their hard and unselfish labours. We must remember also that all this work of a vast organisation is carried on almost entirely with the income derived from the four-anna membership. We depend on no contribution from the rich. This itself is a sign of our strength and popular basis.

The U.P. provincial Congress has two special features which are not found elsewhere. During the last nineteen years, so far as I can remember, no appeal has come from the U.P. to the A.I.C.C. on any election or other matter. This is remarkable as the A.I.C.C. office is flooded with appeals and complaints from other provinces. But we imposed this self-discipline on ourselves and decided to consider our provincial decisions as final. By that we have stood all these years.

The second feature is still more interesting. We have deliberately sought to increase the prestige of our impersonal organisation and not of individuals. For us our provincial committee or its council have counted, not individual office-bearers of it, howsoever eminent. Of course, personality counts and individuals make a difference. But we have preferred laying stress on the democratic basis of the organisation and on its collective wisdom. Thus our presidents have been honoured leaders but their position has not been much more than that of a member of the executive council. They change from year to year, and last year we made a rule enforcing this annual change for every committee. Whoever is the president, the policy continues, as it is guided by the council.

In some other provinces the presidents of the provincial Congress committees have a much higher status and a more important position. They also continue in office year after year. This has some advantages, but I am sure that in the long run the U.P. convention is the sounder and builds up a stronger and more democratic organisation.

Today the real foundation of the Congress in the U.P. is the *mandal* committee, including in its fold forty or so villages. We have many subordinate committees under the *mandal* but effective and disciplined



organisation begins from the *mandal*. The rapid growth of these *mandals* in the province is a sign full of promise for us.

The year 1939 is upon us with all its horror and dismal prophecy of war and conflict. The problems that will confront us will grow more intricate and difficult, requiring all our courage and determination. We have to be vigilant and ever-ready, holding fast to each other and to our cause, not swept away by temporary success, not deterred by setbacks, and bearing ourselves with dignity in good fortune and ill fortune alike. To my innumerable colleagues in this province of ours, dear comrades in a noble enterprise, I send my greetings for the New Year and my earnest wishes that this year will be one of achievement for us.

### 3. Uncertified Khadi<sup>1</sup>

I understand that a number of uncertified khadi *bhandars* in the Punjab have not only most improperly adopted my name for their *bhandars* but also exploit me in other ways. As I have no copyright in my name I cannot prevent other people from using it. But I do object very strongly to these uncertified *bhandars* or their owners trying to justify themselves with a fancied reference to me.

When at the instance of Gandhiji the All India Spinners' Association raised the wages of the spinners and fixed a certain minimum living wage for them, I was in entire agreement with this policy. Khadi would have little virtue in it if it was based on sweated labour and the exploitation of the spinners. Therefore if khadi is to flourish, as we want it to flourish, it must be based on a minimum living wage scheme. Those *bhandars* which accept this scheme are certified. Those who do not accept it can obviously not be certified as they use sweated labour for the khadi they produce. It thus becomes the obvious duty of every person, who wants proper wage standards to prevail, to encourage only the khadi which is produced under the minimum living wage scheme. This means that we must only buy our khadi from certified *bhandars*. We cannot individually go about inquiring as to the wages of the spinners. But when we deal with a certified *bhandar* we can

1. Article printed in *Harijan*, 11 March 1939.

feel assured that we are helping the payment of proper wages to the producers. I hope, therefore, that all Congressmen and others who wish to encourage khadi will insist on using certified khadi.

#### 4. The Tasks of the Congress<sup>1</sup>

Originally I had not intended to visit Cawnpore. In fact I do not intend to make tours as I want to attend to some other matters. I have, however, come to Cawnpore as I was pressed to do so. I regret I could not visit Cawnpore during the riots, which it was my duty to do; but the truth is that I did not know what I could possibly do by coming. The riots in themselves are not something very serious, but the atmosphere which they create is vicious in the extreme. We should all instead of feeling discouraged think about it gravely. We should not forget that we have to tackle many important issues and if we are discouraged or lose heart when confronted with those problems, we will not be able to do the real work for our country. The country has before it many difficult problems and what lies behind them is of even greater significance. We have to understand the nature of these problems and find solution.

The main problem which our country faces is that of the workers and the kisans. We have to distribute work and remove unemployment. Many elaborate resolutions have been passed in this connection. The U.P. Assembly for the last several months has been discussing one such measure which probably would soon be passed. In fact, it would have been passed long ago but for the obstructionist policy of the zamindars. I am afraid, probably the same policy may be followed in the legislative council. If the legislation is passed, I expect that some of the troubles of the kisans would be removed. This would strengthen the mass movement and also our organisation.

The big zamindars, coming from all parts of the country, met in a conference in Lucknow to oppose the legislation for the welfare of the kisans. Their cries will however be of no avail. If the kisans show the strength of nonviolent resistance and do not indulge in hooliganism, then the zamindar conference would be able to do nothing.

1. Speech at the Kanpur District Political Conference, Maitha, 9 April 1939.  
From *The Hindustan Times*, 12 April 1939.



The hardships endured by the kisans are numerous. To remove them we shall have to do a lot. It is for the smaller zamindars and the kisans to think whether the management of their lands on a *panchayati* basis would remove their troubles or not. It is true that this question is not before us at present, but wherever such an arrangement existed, it has all been for the good of kisans. This question is therefore bound to come up before us later.

When there was communal trouble at Cawnpore and a Shia-Sunni friction at Lucknow, it was natural that our minds should have strayed away from the consideration of bigger issues and got entangled in smaller ones.

These quarrels and clashes have nothing whatever to do with religion. Religion is used merely as an excuse to excite the people. All this is done in order to harm the kisans and the movement for Swaraj. If we let our minds get entangled in these quarrels, the purpose of those who are behind them would be served and our main work would suffer. In my view, the leaders of such disturbances are usually those people who are opposed to the kisans and the workers.

For the last twenty years we have been fighting our battle for freedom against the British. We should not forget this and stray away from our main task. We should, therefore, think about all these matters calmly and then take our decisions.

We owe our present strength to our organisation. The Congress which is our most powerful organisation derives its strength from the masses. It is this strength which enables it to fight the might of the great British Empire and shake it. We should therefore do nothing which would reduce this strength. Those who want to weaken the Congress do not in reality want Swaraj. It does not matter who they are and whether they belong to the Hindu Mahasabha or the Muslim League. Our main work, therefore, is to strengthen the Congress, which even today is invincible.

A large number of people have joined the Congress after seeing its growing power. A number of them are self-seekers. If the Congress has to become a fighting machine for Swaraj then all those who join it should do so to become soldiers and not the seekers of office. Quarrels have sprung up among us because we have removed our gaze from the main fight. It is not only in the lower ranks of the Congress that this is happening. It has infected the upper ranks also. The Congress *mandal* committees should, of course, be set up but not with a view to fight with the services. I feel sorry to say that the *mandal* Congress committees attach more importance to the quarrels with the services than they should. Of course, if it is found that some officer is tyrannical or

otherwise guilty, then his conduct should be reported to higher authorities. But it is improper that we should interfere in the day-to-day work of the officials. It has therefore been decided that no Congress official should interfere in these matters, and if he does so, an explanation should be demanded from him. It is unthinkable that we should turn a fighting organization into an office for receiving complaints against officials. The time has now come when we should march forward.

In the present-day world certain nations commit acts of loot and plunder vis-a-vis other nations. The British Government's attitude in these matters is a strange one. While it has repeatedly declared that it stands for peace, it has betrayed its friends whenever it has suited it. Probably, if we search the pages of history, we shall not come across more numerous instances of such betrayals as have occurred during the last eight months. We should regulate our own conduct after carefully watching the turn of world events and the conditions in our country. The resolution passed by the provincial Congress committee declared that the British Government wanted to further reduce the power of the provincial governments during the period of emergency. We should, therefore, be ready to oppose such a move.

The Congress volunteers should be ready to carry on a nonviolent fight. With this as our ideal we have changed the name of the Congress volunteers into that of Kaumi Seva Dal.<sup>2</sup> Members of this force should serve the country in one form or another by spreading out into the villages and towns even though it may be for a service as humble as that of cleaning a village.

2. The name of the Congress volunteer corps in Kanpur was changed from Kaumi Sena Dal to Kaumi Seva Dal by the P.C.C. The post of *senapati* was abolished and a network of volunteer organisations for serving the villagers was proposed.

## 5. To V.K. Krishna Menon<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
April 18, 1939

My dear Krishna,

I have received a number of letters from you dated the 5th and 8th of April.

About the personal matters that you write to me, I can well understand what has been happening and can also appreciate how it must

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.



have upset you. I am sorry that my name has been exploited in any way.<sup>2</sup> But, as I write to you previously, I have developed a habit of sending my good wishes to all and sundry, if they ask for them. A sheaf of them goes daily to all manner of people whom I do not know. I take the risk, as to err on the other side seems to be worse. You must not misunderstand this. Now that I know a little more of events at the other end I shall be more careful. Anyway, do not take these things too much to heart. I feel very tired myself with our bright young things and they have had a free run during the last two months. If you could see the kind of letters that I have got, of the continuous press campaign that has been going on, you will form some vague idea of how those who call themselves leftists (quite wrongly) behaved.

Indira has gone and will soon be with you. The doctors here were firmly of opinion that she should not stay in England for more than a week at the most and that she should go to Switzerland. Of course all this depends on the war situation. If war comes there is no point in her staying on in England for long. I am not afraid of the personal danger involved. But the whole situation will be too tense and exciting. I have suggested to her that in case of war she might gradually go to America. She might spend a few months there, if she wants to, and then return to India *via* China. I am providing her with some funds, but in case an emergency arises, I have asked her to get money from you. You will, I hope, be able to arrange this for a few days till I can send the amount.

I have received intimation about the payment of the second instalment of royalties on *Glimpses*. Also of £42 on the Lane royalties.

Did I write to you that Allen Lane was thinking of bringing out a Penguin book containing various essays of mine? I referred him to you. I think it might be easily possible to make a good selection now from the material with you. To that material you can add *Where Are We?*<sup>3</sup> and the Ludhiana address,<sup>4</sup> as well as odd articles like *The Choice Before Us*.<sup>5</sup> All this will be, for England, new material.

Regarding *Glimpses*, I have received about 350 pages of proofs. I have no intention of reading through them. For the moment I do not require more proofs. But it would be desirable to have two more sets for possible translators. I had hoped that the book would come out

2. Krishna Menon wrote that some Indians in Britain were obstructing his activities and using Jawaharlal's name and letters for this purpose.

3. See *post*, section 8, item 5.

4. See pp. 418-431.

5. See pp. 166-171.

early in the year but, from what you say, it will not appear before September.

About an addition to *Glimpses* to bring them up to date, my own idea was that this should be almost a bald narrative of facts. Anything more would mean writing a lot and making the last part disproportionately big. After all we are dealing with the world for some thousands of years. Long chapters on particular events of present-day importance will not fit in. For instance, I do not see how *Where Are We?* fits in, or a special chapter on Spain. Anyway, I suggest that you might send me a brief note, chiefly factual, for 6 months from November onwards.

Kitabistan are a curious lot. But there can be no trouble with them now as they have no further rights in it. I think Drummond had better stick to what I suggested, that is, to have Kitabistan's name in the Indian edition.

Yours affectionately,  
Jawaharlal

## 6. The Internal Weakness of the Congress<sup>1</sup>

It is almost a year since I visited Cawnpore last. The year has been a momentous one. One seems to have lived in it not merely 365 days, but within a year it seemed as if the experience of many years had been crowded. And the changes have been so swift and so sudden as to seem bewildering.

I am glad to notice signs of awakening among the kisans, the workers and the others. But while doing so, I cannot merely content myself by seeing only one side of the picture. I would not be honest if I did not see the other side also, and having seen it did not give expression to what I felt or saw. I confess that the mind, however trained and disciplined, often feels bewildered when faced with the huge task of solving intricate problems. It would not be easy to untie the difficult problems confronting us—the problems relating to our own country and to other parts of the world. I would only dwell in passing on some of the outstanding problems.

1. Speech at Kanpur, 21 May 1939. From *The Leader*, 25 May 1939.



I am glad to notice that my countrymen are now instilled with a new courage. But I cannot overlook hard facts. We must admit that forces, both in and outside the Congress, are at work which tend to weaken the great organisation. I do not claim that the Congress is above criticism. There could be legitimate complaints against whatever happened in it as well as against the Congress ministries. In fact, I can criticise both more than most people. But mere criticism will not solve our difficulties. Mere complaints are idle and useless.

Over our country there still hangs the great darkness. The dawn is yet far off, and all that we see is only a faint glimmer. Over Europe there hangs a still darker night. But in our own country, if the Congress failed, an impenetrable night would close in all around us. It is true that our strength has so increased that no power of the British Empire can now check us from reaching our goal. But we must recognise that internally we have grown weak, and this has happened without Britain to blame. I wonder if we do not delude ourselves like the man who saw a flourishing tree, leaves glossy and smooth and the tree full of blossoms, and yet, unknown to him, the roots were being hollowed out and a canker ate into the very vitals of the tree. I cannot, however, bring myself to believe that such is the picture of the Congress. The Congress is a mighty tree nourished by the life-blood of innumerable people who made great sacrifices for their country. I would, therefore, ask you not to let yourselves be beguiled by a spirit of cavil or criticism, but to let your minds rest on deep and fundamental things. This is all the more necessary in a world where things move with lightning rapidity and there is a temptation to lose sight of things of basic value.

I have felt deeply hurt by the happenings at Cawnpore, Benares and Allahabad, resulting in communal clashes. I also feel deeply hurt by the Shia-Sunni strife at Lucknow. But even these happenings, painful as they are, do not fill me with despair. It is the fear that Congressmen are now losing sight of the basic issues that fills me with nervousness. In the past, despite criticism, Congress leaders never lost sight of the basic issues. They recognised that they must hold fast to them whatever may be the circumstances. I am doubtful how far Congressmen keep those basic ideas in mind nowadays.

Personally, I do not think it necessary to say much about the new group<sup>2</sup> formed by Mr. Subhas Bose. There are certain matters over which I agree with Mr. Bose, but there are also matters on which I disagree with him. Similarly, I agree on many questions with Mahatma

2. See p. 352.

Gandhi and disagree on others. I keep my eyes and ears open and do not blindly follow anyone. I do not question Mr. Bose's right to form his own group or organisation, but nothing should be done to create either a split in or weaken the great Congress organisation. Mr. Bose had also said the same thing, but, I am afraid, Mr. Bose's move would weaken the Congress. In a living organisation like the Congress, differences of opinion are inevitable and even in regard to principles, there can be differences, and I recognise groups based on these differences of basic principles. But where that is not so, principles are lost in personalities and groups tend to be formed not on the basis of any differences on principles but due to a clash of personalities. A discussion about basic principles is permissible and the public should be enlightened about these differences by such a discussion, but I deprecate any move to weaken the power of the Congress, as it would be harmful to the interest of the country.

I would also like to draw your attention to certain other important aspects of the situation which concern our own province. I feel happy to notice the awakening among the Muslims and the kisans. While some good has resulted from this awakening, bad results have also flowed from it, and there is a tendency for communal organisations to stray into wrong directions. Besides the evil of communal organisations, I have also noticed a tendency to break into groups or parties. There is mutual suspicion and distrust of tried public leaders. The strength of the Congress has been weakened by the enrolment of bogus members. I want in particular to draw attention to the atmosphere which pervades our country, and more specially Cawnpore. When I last came to the city the great labour strike was on. In Europe, I often received news how the strike was proceeding and I felt glad to hear of the labour victory, and more so of the disciplined way in which that fight was fought.

I would not enter into the details of this question. I notice, however, that the employers did not relish the workers' victory, especially as they felt that they had also the sympathy of the provincial government. Therefore, in a thousand ways, they tried to trouble the workers and embarrass the governments. But the workers had not been entirely blameless. They often went wrong and weakened themselves, forgetting that their adversary was strong and resourceful. They should therefore concentrate their energies on building up a strong organisation and not fritter them away on trifling issues. They should not forget that Cawnpore is an industrial city and anything which threatens its industry would harm the great city and the general public and ultimately themselves. My natural sympathy is with the workers, but with all



this sympathy for them, if they behave in an irresponsible manner, which they often do, or in an indisciplined way, they would not merely forfeit my sympathy but that of the general public also.

The decision of the provincial Congress committee did not alter any basic principle underlying the volunteer movement. It simply removed some misunderstanding. A sense of false pride and show had crept into the old Kaumi Sena. Its name and the designations of its officers had filled the latter with a sense of exaggerated self-importance. I do not like this. While I do not oppose the idea of a big national militia, I want at present that a volunteer should be a public servant, and I want millions of such volunteers enrolled in the province. I also want that these volunteers should be distinguishable from such other volunteers who belong to communal organizations. The volunteers still have to learn much, and I do not think it enough that they should merely be able to move with regular steps. What is most important is that they should be efficient and should be engaged in national service.

I approve of the idea of celebrating the political prisoners' release day in accordance with the appeal made by the Congress President. But I would like to ask how far it is consistent with our dignity that our young men should still rot in jails. Is it not a matter of shame that the Congress should not have had power enough to get these young men released? Nine years ago, in April 1930, a significant thing had happened at Peshawar. The Garhwali soldiers, who had been ordered to fire on the public, refused to do so. At least at nine places this thing happened. Of course, the soldiers were severely punished for disobedience of orders. Chandra Singh, the question of whose release attracted particular attention, was their leader and occupied a high position in the army. I personally met Chandra Singh on several occasions and was deeply impressed by him. His behaviour in jail was exemplary. All the jail officers had recommended his release. It was a pity that the Congress thought that he would be released on the basis of these recommendations and therefore made no effort for it. They should carry on an agitation not only in their own province but throughout the country for his release.

Neither criticism of the Congress nor turning away from it would be of any use in overcoming the difficulties with which the country is faced. The only way of doing it is to help the Congress. Those who betray

Gandhi and disagree on others. I keep my eyes and ears open and do not blindly follow anyone. I do not question Mr. Bose's right to form his own group or organisation, but nothing should be done to create either a split in or weaken the great Congress organisation. Mr. Bose had also said the same thing, but, I am afraid, Mr. Bose's move would weaken the Congress. In a living organisation like the Congress, differences of opinion are inevitable and even in regard to principles, there can be differences, and I recognise groups based on these differences of basic principles. But where that is not so, principles are lost in personalities and groups tend to be formed not on the basis of any differences on principles but due to a clash of personalities. A discussion about basic principles is permissible and the public should be enlightened about these differences by such a discussion, but I deprecate any move to weaken the power of the Congress, as it would be harmful to the interest of the country.

I would also like to draw your attention to certain other important aspects of the situation which concern our own province. I feel happy to notice the awakening among the Muslims and the kisans. While some good has resulted from this awakening, bad results have also flowed from it, and there is a tendency for communal organisations to stray into wrong directions. Besides the evil of communal organisations, I have also noticed a tendency to break into groups or parties. There is mutual suspicion and distrust of tried public leaders. The strength of the Congress has been weakened by the enrolment of bogus members. I want in particular to draw attention to the atmosphere which pervades our country, and more specially Cawnpore. When I last came to the city the great labour strike was on. In Europe, I often received news how the strike was proceeding and I felt glad to hear of the labour victory, and more so of the disciplined way in which that fight was fought.

I would not enter into the details of this question. I notice, however, that the employers did not relish the workers' victory, especially as they felt that they had also the sympathy of the provincial government. Therefore, in a thousand ways, they tried to trouble the workers and embarrass the governments. But the workers had not been entirely blameless. They often went wrong and weakened themselves, forgetting that their adversary was strong and resourceful. They should therefore concentrate their energies on building up a strong organisation and not fritter them away on trifling issues. They should not forget that Cawnpore is an industrial city and anything which threatens its industry would harm the great city and the general public and ultimately themselves. My natural sympathy is with the workers, but with all



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Neither criticism of the Congress nor turning away from it would be of any use in overcoming the difficulties with which the country is faced. The only way of doing it is to help the Congress. Those who betray

the Congress or do anything which weakens it, are traitors to the country.

## 7. Malpractices in Party Elections<sup>1</sup>

It is unfortunate that our elections should be run on party lines and on group tickets. Such parties have nothing to do with any principles and are entirely based on personal rivalries. In the higher committees of the Congress, questions of principle do arise, but in ward or city or like elections, no such principles arise and the only consideration should be the desirability of the candidate and his past record of Congress work. In group or party voting, each party's ticket contains both desirables and those who have no claims to elections but who are supported for purely party purposes. A peculiarly unfortunate feature, observable in Khuldabad and elsewhere, is the active interest taken by non-Congress elements in Congress elections. Municipal and city politics intervene in this way and undesirable people are thrust forward. Sometimes purely personal rivalries among non-Congressmen affect our elections.

The P.C.C. has framed new rules to prevent corrupt practices during our elections and these will no doubt result in some improvement. But it may be necessary to frame additional rules, and, in any event, existing rules are to be strictly enforced. Every breach of these rules, every misbehaviour at election time, must be severely dealt with. There has been far too much leniency in this respect in the past, and polling officers have allowed too great a latitude to the contestants.

One of the reasons for the great keenness shown in our *halqa* elections is the desire to reach the city and district committees through the *halqa*. A *halqa* committee consists of 21 members and this committee elects representatives to the city committee. Each party is anxious to have a majority in the *halqa* committee so that it may choose its own lot of six members for the city. Thus if one group has eleven members in the *halqa* committee and the other has ten, the former outvotes the latter completely, and the latter has no chance of sending even one representative to the city. This seems to me to be unfair. If party groupings are to function, and perhaps they are not wholly unavoidable,

1. Interview to the press, Allahabad, 30 May 1939. *National Herald*, 2 June 1939.



then it is desirable for this election, of the members of the city committee by the *halqa* committees, to be held by the system of single transferable vote (proportional representation). This is a complicated system but in a small election where the voters number 21 only there should be no difficulty whatever.

I suggest that this system be adopted by the P.C.C. for all such elections by *mandals* and *halqas*.

In considering the names of the candidates for the Khuldabad *halqa* committee, I have tried to ignore completely their party affiliations, and have paid attention only to their record of work. In many cases I had no sufficient information and had to decide on insufficient data. It is quite possible that I have erred in individual cases and left out people whose presence in the *halqa* committee is desirable. I am sorry for this but it really does not matter much. Those who are desirous of doing Congress work have always the opportunity to do so whether they are members of committees or not. Each *halqa* committee should welcome non-member Congressmen at its meetings and seek their cooperation in the work.

Unfortunately the keenness shown at election time is not reflected in subsequent work. This must be changed and every person who has the privilege to be elected to a *halqa* or a *mandal* or city or district committee must show a record of continuous work. I think that each such member should send a monthly report of his Congress activities, and those who have no Congress activities to their credit should resign and give place to others. The honour to be on a Congress committee is no empty honour and it carries with it a responsibility. If any person cannot shoulder that responsibility, it is better for him to retire from that position.

The city committee, as well as the *halqa* committee, should, whenever necessary, form special sub-committees to push our various activities. In these sub-committees non-members of the committees should be taken in to afford them full scope for work. Sub-committees can be formed for the enrolment of members, campaign for volunteers as well as for other purposes. Particular attention, I think, should be paid to developing the Congress volunteer movement.

A question has arisen as to how far the recent resolution of the P.C.C.<sup>2</sup> against those who have opposed Congress candidates in municipal or other elections, affects any of the candidates for Khuldabad.

2. The P.C.C. had debarred those who had opposed Congress candidates in the elections from standing for any office without special permission. It also assumed general powers of disciplinary action.

There are old-standing complaints against some Congressmen in the city who are alleged to have opposed Congress candidates in the 1935 municipal elections. Over two years ago I went into this matter and some disciplinary action was taken or warning issued. I think that so far as Allahabad city is concerned, it is not worthwhile, generally speaking, to have fresh inquiries in these old matters. In one or two particular instances it might be necessary. The *Suba Adalat* has, of course, full authority to do so whenever it chooses. I have not thought it necessary to consider this matter afresh so far as Khuldabad elections are concerned.

I should like, however, to say that the activities of a few persons are so intensely of a party character that the good that they do by their work is more than undone by these activities. They are capable of good work and they have done good work in the past. But when election time comes, they seem to lose all control over themselves and give a good deal of trouble. A Congressman, however good a worker he might be, is harmful to our cause if he cannot keep out of petty personal groupings which intrigue against each other.

In the selection I have made and which I give below, I have inevitably had to leave out some good names as the total number is limited. One name I should have liked to add to the *halqa* committee but have been unable to do so. This is Mr. Abdul Wahab's name. He has been connected with the Congress for many years and usually wears khadi, but not always. He frankly admitted to me that he sometimes wore non-khadi clothes. Under the rules I cannot overlook this lapse and so I regret that I cannot recommend his name. I hope that he will stick to khadi only, in future.

I should like to warn all other *halqa* committee members of this rule of khadi-wearing. This is going to be strictly enforced for all members of our elective committees.

I attach to this note the names of twenty one persons who have been selected for the Khuldabad *halqa* committee. They will constitute the committee forthwith and proceed to elect their office-bearers and their six representatives for the city committee. As I have indicated above, this election of six members of the city committee should take place by the single transferable vote. A very early meeting for this purpose should be fixed up by the returning officer of the city and he should preside over it himself. He should explain the method fully to the voters and make arrangements for voting in his presence. After collecting the voting papers he should adjourn the meeting. The counting and calculation necessary should be done by him later in his own office and the result sent to the president of the city Congress committee.



In view of what I suggest above, it is not necessary for the *Suba Adalat* to consider the matter of the Khuldabad election any further.

Certain objections having been taken to the election to the Khuldabad *halqa* committee, the matter was referred to the *Suba Adalat*. The *Adalat* decided to withhold the announcement of the result of the election till they had considered the reference to them. Their decision would have meant either a confirmation of the election already held or a setting aside of it and the holding of another election. The *Adalat* suggested, however, that it would be desirable to arrive at a mutually satisfactory arrangement among the parties concerned and thus avoid a decision by them on technical issues.

In compliance with this suggestion, I met various candidates and representatives of groups and discussed the matter with them. They were agreeable to having a committee to arbitrate. This committee was to consist of a representative from each of the two main groups with a neutral third member elected by the two. This committee was formed and Shrimati Sucheta Kripalani<sup>3</sup> was chosen as its third member. The committee encountered some difficulties and came to me for consultation. Later it was decided by the parties concerned that the matter be left to me for final decision.

I have gone into the matter carefully and conferred with a considerable number of local men who were interested in it. I have especially taken advantage of Shrimati Sucheta Kripalani's advice in the matter, and the decisions I have arrived at may be considered our joint decisions.

3. (1903-1974); married Acharya Kripalani, 1936; secretary of the women's section of the Congress, 1939; worked underground from 1942 till arrest in 1944; member, Congress Working Committee, 1947; General Secretary of the Congress, 1959; minister in U.P. Government, 1962; Chief Minister, U.P., 1963-64.

## 8. The Congress and Other Organisations<sup>1</sup>

It has been suggested that the words "or any other" be added after the words "communal". This widens the scope of the clause and it is possible that this new addition might be misused to some extent. I have therefore hesitated to agree to this change.

There can be no doubt that an organisation should have the power to keep out of its committees such persons as are engaged in activities opposed to the objective or policy of that organisation. It may also be necessary to apply this new rule to other organisations as suggested. I think that this power is inherent in an organisation and the Congress possesses it without express authority being given to it by the constitution.

There are in India today many disruptive tendencies and forces which might, unless checked, weaken the Congress internally. Logically, therefore, I appreciate the reason for the change suggested. But in the atmosphere of today such a change is likely to be misconstrued and may lead to wrong results. In my opinion, where action is necessary, it should be taken against individuals who have erred and this should be taken unhesitatingly. Action against organisations should be avoided as far as possible, though on rare occasions this may become inevitable. In any event nothing should be done to create the impression that opinions as such are being penalised.

1. This dissenting note was appended to the report of the constitution sub-committee of the A.I.C.C. which had recommended extension of the ban on communalists from election to the Congress elective bodies to those belonging to any "other" organisation. *National Herald*, 11 June 1939.

## 9. To Rajendra Prasad<sup>1</sup>

Lucknow  
July 7, 1939

My dear Rajendra Babu,

I am writing to you regarding the minorities problem and how we are trying to deal with it in the U.P. More especially I want to draw your

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.



attention to certain difficulties that have arisen on account of the recent changes in the Congress constitution.

During the last two or three years the U.P.P.C.C. has paid a great deal of attention to this problem. We have not concerned ourselves so much with the wider national aspect of the problem, although we have naturally discussed this also. Mostly we have tried to grapple with the day-to-day aspects. It is true that in spite of our efforts, the situation has deteriorated and it may be said that there is more general ill will among the Muslim masses towards the Congress than there has been at any time in the past. Nevertheless, our record of work in this matter is not negligible. We have as our close colleagues in the Congress a considerable number of Muslims of position who have been doing Congress work with enthusiasm. Indeed we worked together not as Hindus or Muslims but as Congressmen. It has been a privilege to us to have this comradeship in all our work during these dark days of communal reaction. The Muslim membership on our rolls during the past year has been considerable. It is not possible to give the exact number but a rough estimate of one hundred thousand has been made for the U.P. I realise fully that such a membership does not mean very much. Yet it means something. It means that in spite of the aggravation of communal feelings among Hindus and Muslims alike and in spite of the intensive activities of the Muslim League in this province, we have a solid core of Congress-minded Muslims. This core includes, as I have stated above, some valued colleagues who have been and are a source of strength to the general Congress movement in the U.P. This fact has to be remembered, although there is no doubt that we have been unable to check the growth of communalism and anti-Congress feelings among the Muslim masses.

We have had various sub-committees trying to deal with this problem. Two or three months back we reorganised our work and put an end to mass contact committees and departments named as such. Instead we appointed a strong minorities committee consisting chiefly of leading Muslim Congressmen in the province as well as some Hindu, Christian and, I believe, representatives of the depressed class also. We started also Hindi and Urdu publicity departments. We wanted to avoid a communal nomenclature. We started a special office of this minorities committee in Allahabad in charge of Maulana Muhammad Mian Farruqui. This was in addition to their office connected with our P.C.C. office in Lucknow.

We are developing this office under the enthusiastic and able supervision of Maulana Muhammad Mian and various schemes for publicity and propaganda are being developed. This work is not being done in

any spirit of hostility to the Muslim League or any other organisation. Our object is not to raise controversies but to explain the Congress position and principles, to remove and correct errors, and to give some elementary political and nationalist education to the Muslims as well as to the other masses. We are appointing a number of inspectors and organisers also. I shall not however go into greater details of our work in this connection unless you require them. Our minorities department and Maulana Muhammad Mian will of course keep in intimate touch with Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and seek his advice whenever necessary.

One of the problems we have had to face during the past two years especially has been the non-return of sufficient numbers of the Muslims or the Christians during our various Congress elections. We have no means to ensure a proper return. All we could do was to issue repeated circulars to various Congress committees in the province impressing upon them the necessity of giving due representation to the minorities. These circulars had some effect but generally speaking they did not produce much results. There was usually no feeling whatever against the minority candidates but elections were so keenly contested that the minority stood little chance. This was specially so in our rural elections, as Muslims and Christians are usually town-dwellers. The result was that there was a total absence of them from most of our rural *mandal* committees and only a very small number got into most of our district and town committees. The position was somewhat better in the northern districts where the Muslims formed a large part of the population in the towns. I am glad to say, however, that in our superior committee elections the Muslims on the whole did well, though even there I would have liked them to do better. There are a fair number of Muslims in our P.C.C. as well as in the executive of the P.C.C. and in the A.I.C.C. from the U.P.

During the last year, as I have mentioned above, we enrolled a large number of Muslim members but they were not elected to our district and town committees, apparently because the number of others increased greatly. We have been giving serious thought to it for some time past. Now owing to the new changes in the constitution, fresh difficulties have cropped up—the distinction between urban and rural having been abolished and constituencies made permanent. The result is that urban areas are likely to have less representation than rural areas. As the minorities are chiefly urban, they will be affected by this all the more and the poor chances they have so far had of getting elected to our committees will be lessened all the more. This is a serious matter.

Another point to be considered is that a Muslim who gets elected to a committee is not perhaps the best candidate in the area among the



Muslims. A better candidate gets defeated because he refuses to tie himself to the parties running the election. A nonentity who appears as a party man gets through. This of course applies to all Hindus and Muslims and would inevitably be an undesirable development of the democratic method.

We had a meeting of our minorities committee today where these various problems were considered at length and I was asked to bring them to your notice. I do not know what exactly can be done in this matter, especially now when the constitution has already been changed. That is for the Working Committee to consider. But there are some things which perhaps we can do in our own province so far as our various committees are concerned from the province to the *mandal*. We can introduce clauses in our constitution permitting of co-option of members to various committees up to a certain prescribed limit. So far as our district, city, town and *mandal* committees are concerned, I suppose this is entirely within our competence. So far as the provincial committee is concerned, this is formed by the body of delegates. We would like to have the power to co-opt to the P.C.C. also, such co-opted members of course not being made delegates to the Congress but only remaining members of the P.C.C. If this is possible for us, it might enable us to meet the present difficulty.

This process of co-option might not only help the minorities but also other important individuals who have been left out in these days of party politics. It is better than reservation of seats for a community or group which is objected to by most people largely on the grounds of principle.

We have appointed a constitution sub-committee to bring our provincial constitution in line with the new all-India constitution. This sub-committee can consider this matter also. Our final proposals will of course be sent to the Working Committee for their approval. But even before we do that we should like to have your advice as to whether the course I have suggested above is a right one.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Maulana Abul Kalam Azad.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal

## 10. Indiscipline in the Congress<sup>1</sup>

We have observed many an all-India day for one thing or another. They have all been in accordance with the programme of the Congress as decided by the A.I.C.C. or the Working Committee or as desired by the President of the Congress. They have all been to demonstrate against our enemy and on behalf of the Congress as a whole. But it is for the first time that I have come across a proposal of Congressmen appealing to hold demonstrations against the Congress itself.

It is highly improper to organise protest meetings in this fashion against the decision of a parent body. All Congressmen should consider the seriousness of the lapse on the part of those organising such a protest meeting.

What would happen to the issue of indiscipline then? The question should be dealt with by the Congress on a certain future date. Nothing can be said about it at present except that it would, no doubt, be decided by competent authorities in the Congress.

Remember the unique position of the United Provinces which has produced a number of leaders, political, religious or otherwise, both among the Hindus and the Muslims. The Congress workers should maintain that tradition by observing strict discipline in the organisation.

The U.P. has till now never referred any of its grievances to the A.I.C.C. over the head of its P.C.C., while in other provinces this has been done in a large number of cases. It is, of course, not my intention to draw comparisons with other provinces. I, however, wish to draw your attention to some of the good qualities that the Congressmen in this province have so far displayed so that you may maintain the same during the present critical time when there is so much of indiscipline in evidence at several places in the Congress organisation.

If members of executive bodies do not intend to work honestly and sincerely then they should vacate their seats and make room for others.

I also wish to see quick and wide enrolment of members within the coming two months. I would also ask all members to attend monthly flag hoisting ceremonies without fail. For these a register will be maintained.

1. Speech at the Allahabad Town Congress Committee meeting, 10 July 1939.  
From *National Herald*, 12 July 1939.



## THE TRIPURI CONGRESS AND AFTER





## 1. The Congress Presidential Election<sup>1</sup>

For the last ten days I have been somewhat isolated in the Kumaun hills where the newspapers reach me late and sometimes my information is derived from the news given on the radio. Under these circumstances I have no business to intervene in a controversy and, in any event, I had no desire to do so, but from the little news that has reached me, I feel that the presidential controversy has taken an unfortunate turn and wrong issues have been raised. I venture, therefore, to put certain matters before the public which might help to clarify the situation. I have so far not read the various statements that have been issued, except the Congress President's first statement.<sup>2</sup>

To begin with, I should like to make it clear that I am not making this statement in support of, or in opposition to, any candidate for the presidentship. Important as the presidential election is, it is a secondary matter. What is far more important is the policy and programme of the Congress. I have seen in the past that presidential elections do not make much difference to this policy which is ultimately laid down by the Congress itself or the A.I.C.C. A President can, however, make a difference in the carrying out of a policy and a Congress President is not, in my opinion, merely a speaker. May I also say that I am not opposed to an election contest and I think that when definite policies and programmes are in conflict, a contest is usually desirable and helps clarification.

What are the different programmes in conflict in this presidential election? There are many vital problems in India, but as reference has been

1. Statement to the press, Almora, 26 January 1939. *The Hindu*, 27 January 1939.
2. Following the withdrawal of Abul Kalam Azad from the Congress presidential contest, Subhas Bose, in a press statement on 21 January 1939, said: "In discussing this question all sense of false modesty will have to be put aside, for the issue is not a personal one. The progressive sharpening of the anti-imperialist struggle in India has given birth to new ideas, ideologies, problems, and programmes. People are consequently veering round to the opinion that, as in other free countries, the presidential election in India should be fought on the basis of definite problems and programmes so that the contest may help the clarification of issues and give a clear indication of the working of the public mind. An election contest in these circumstances may not be an undesirable thing."

made only to federation, I take it that there is no conflict in the presidential election in regard to the others.<sup>3</sup> Is there a conflict regarding federation? I am not aware of it and the Congress attitude is definite and clear. I gave expression to this attitude in unambiguous language in England and, in doing so, I was not merely expressing my opinion but that of the Working Committee. I took care to send full reports of what I said and did to the Congress President and the Working Committee and asked for directions.<sup>4</sup> I was informed that the attitude I had taken up in regard to federation met with the approval of the Working Committee and of Gandhiji. Since then the position has hardened considerably and it seems to me monstrous for any Congressman to think in terms of compromising on federation.

Is the growing struggle in the Indian states a prelude to our flirting with federation? We drift rapidly towards a crisis in India as in the world and it is in terms of this crisis that we should think. I think it is time that we pushed away the federation from our minds as something that cannot come, because we will not have it, and thought more positively in terms of self-determination, and our own future.

Apart from national reasons, the foreign policy of the British Government is so utterly bad and hateful that I want my country to have nothing to do with such a government. There is, thus, no question of conflict over the federation in this election. There are, of course, many conflicts within the Congress, but none of them are affected much by this election. I should personally like a clarification of these conflicts and problems. The vital question before us is how we are to shape in the coming international and national crisis. We may not do anything which might create a domestic conflict and, thus, disable us when we most need our united strength.

I have some experience of the Congress presidentship during trying times and on several occasions I was on the point of resigning, because I felt that I could serve our cause and the Congress better without office. This year some colleagues urged me to stand again for the presidentship. I refused absolutely, for reasons which I need not discuss here. For those and other reasons, I was equally clear that Subhas Babu should not stand. I felt that his and my capacity for effective work would be

3. In the same statement, Subhas Bose had said : "... In view of the increasing international tension and the prospective fight over federation the new year will be a momentous one in our national history. Owing to this and other reasons ... with what justification can I withdraw from the contest when the issue involved is not a personal one at all?..."

4. See pp. 93-105 and 131-137.



lessened by holding this office at this stage. I told Subhas Babu so. I was equally clear in my mind that the obvious person for the presidentship was Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. Every line of reasoning led me to this conclusion. He was peculiarly fitted to deal with some of our vital problems. He had that delicate insight and sensitiveness which understood and appreciated viewpoints other than his own. He is an elder statesman of the Congress, respected and trusted by all and most fitted to keep our varied ranks together. May I add that my admiration for his keen intelligence and rare insight has grown from year to year during the past twenty years that I have been privileged to know him? I pressed him to agree to stand for the presidentship and so did many others. We had thought that we had convinced him, but unfortunately he did not agree finally. His weak health and his dislike of publicity and election contests came in his way.

Personally I do not see what principles or programmes are at stake in this election. I do not want it to be said at the end of the contest that a particular programme had been rejected when in fact it was not an issue. Whoever wins, the federation loses. I trust that if there is a contest, the high dignity of our cause will be borne in mind by all concerned and that nothing will be done which may weaken the great organisation in whose service so many of us have spent our lives. The future is dark with conflict and we shall have to brace ourselves to meet it as a united people with courage and confidence, forgetting persons and remembering principles and our cause.

## 2. To Vallabhbhai Patel<sup>1</sup>

Your telegram.<sup>2</sup> Personally regret Subhas Babu's statement. Would have preferred under present circumstances his not standing. But joint statement you suggest raises difficulties and questions of principle. Would prefer therefore not to be signatory.

1. Telegram sent from Almora, 26 January 1939. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. On 24 January 1939, Patel requested Jawaharlal to sign a joint statement of the members of the Congress Working Committee criticising Subhas Bose's intention to contest the Congress presidential election.

## 3. To Subhas Chandra Bose<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
February 4, 1939

My dear Subhas,

We had an hour's talk or more in Santiniketan but I am afraid we did not succeed in clearing up the situation. Indeed we could not, as there are so many uncertainties and I do not know how matters will shape themselves. We have to await these developments but at the same time these developments themselves depend on us, and especially on you.

As I told you, your contested election has done some good and some harm. I recognise the good but I am apprehensive of the harm that will follow. I still think that in the balance it would have been better if this particular conflict had not taken place in this way. But that is a thing of the past and we have to face the future. This future we have to view from the larger viewpoint and not in terms of personalities. Obviously it is not good enough for any one of us to get into a huff because matters have not shaped as we wished them to. We have to

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.



give our best to the cause whatever happens. Granting that, it is not easy to see the right path and my mind is troubled about the future.

The first thing we have to do is to understand each other's viewpoints as fully as possible. The framing of resolutions is simple enough if this is done, but with our minds full of conflicts and doubts as to what the other is aiming at, it is no easy matter to try to shape the future. During the past few years I have come into intimate contact with Gandhiji and Vallabhbhai and others of his way of thinking. We have had repeated and prolonged discussions and although we have failed to convince each other, we have influenced each other considerably and we have, I believe, understood each other to a large extent. As long ago as 1933, on my coming out of prison, I went to Poona to see Gandhiji when he was recovering from his fast. We had long talks about the various aspects of our struggle and then exchanged letters which were subsequently published.<sup>2</sup> Those letters and talks revealed both our temperamental and fundamental differences as well as the many things we had in common. Since then, in private and in the Working Committee, frequent discussions have taken place. On several occasions I have been on the point of resigning from the presidentship and even the Working Committee. But I refrained because I thought this would precipitate a crisis at a moment when unity was essential. Perhaps I was wrong.

Now this crisis has come in a manner that is unfortunate. Before I can determine on my own course of action I must have some notion of what you want the Congress to be and to do. I am entirely at sea about this. There has been a lot of talk of leftists and rightists, of federation, etc., and yet, so far as I can remember, no vital matters affecting these questions have been discussed by us in the Working Committee during your presidentship. I do not know who you consider a leftist and who a rightist. The way these words were used by you in your statements during the presidential contest seemed to imply that Gandhiji and those who are considered as his group in the Working Committee are the rightist leaders. Their opponents, whoever they might be, are the leftists. That seems to me an entirely wrong description. It seems to me that many of the so-called leftists are more right than the so-called rightists. Strong language and a capacity to criticise and attack the old Congress leadership is not a test of leftism in politics. It seems to me that one of our chief dangers in the immediate future is the emergence into office and positions of responsibility of persons who are devoid of any sense of responsibility or any true appreciation of the situation, and

2. See *Selected Works*, Vol. 5, pp. 526-530.

are not conspicuous in possessing intelligence of a high order. They will create a situation which is bound to lead to a big reaction and then the real leftists will be swept away. The example of China is before us and I do not want India to follow that unhappy path, if I can help it.

I think the use of the words left and right has been generally wholly wrong and confusing. If, instead of these words, we talked about policies it would be far better. What policy do you stand for? Anti-federation, well and good. I think that the great majority of the members of the Working Committee stand for that and it is not fair to hint at their weakness in this respect. Would it not have been better for you to discuss this matter fully in the Working Committee or even to bring forward a resolution on the subject and then note the reactions? Surely without first fully discussing a matter with your colleagues it was hardly fair to accuse them *en bloc* of back-sliding. I will not repeat here what I told you of the extraordinary accusation you made about ministries in the federation being already divided up. Inevitably most people thought that your colleagues of the Working Committee were the guilty parties.

You will remember that I sent long reports from Europe to you and the Working Committee. I discussed in great detail what our attitude to federation should be and asked for directions. You sent me none, not even an acknowledgment. Gandhiji agreed with my method of approach and so, I was told, did most of the members of the Working Committee. I do not yet know what your reactions were. But apart from informing me, was that not an opportunity for you to discuss this matter thoroughly in the Working Committee and decide this way or that? Unfortunately in this and other matters you have adopted an entirely passive attitude in the Working Committee although sometimes you have given expression to your views outside. In effect, you have functioned more as a Speaker than as a directing President.

The A.I.C.C. office has deteriorated greatly during the past year. You have not even seen it and letters and telegrams to you are seldom answered with the result that many office matters get hung up indefinitely. Just at the moment when our organisation requires the closest attention, the headquarters function ineffectively.

We have the states question and the Hindu-Muslim question, and the kisans and the workers. There are many viewpoints about them and some conflict. Do you hold definite views on any of them which are at variance with those of your colleagues? Take the Bombay Trades Disputes Bill. I disagree with some of its provisions and if I had been here I would have tried my utmost to get them changed. Do you also



disagree and if so did you try to get them altered? In regard to the general agrarian situation in the various provinces, including Bengal, I do not know what your specific views are.

The provincial Congress governments are rapidly heading towards minor crises, and it is quite likely that the development of the states movement will lead to a major crisis in which all of us, including the provincial governments, will be involved. What do you think should be the course we should adopt? Your desire to have a coalition ministry in Bengal seems hardly to fit in with your protest against a drift towards constitutionalism.<sup>3</sup> Ordinarily it would be considered a rightist step, and especially now when the situation is rapidly developing.

Then there is foreign policy to which, as you know, I attach great importance, especially at this juncture. So do you as far as I can make out. But I do not know yet exactly what policy you envisage. I know generally Gandhiji's viewpoint and I do not wholly agree with it though we can and have pulled on together for the last two or three years of international crisis and he has often accepted my viewpoint without wholly agreeing with it.

These and many other questions arise in my mind and I know that many others are troubled by them, including those who have voted for you in the election. It is quite possible that many of these people may vote quite differently on issues raised in the Congress and a new situation might arise there.

The formation of the Working Committee will raise a host of problems. The final problem will be to have a Committee which commands the confidence of the A.I.C.C. and the Congress generally. This in itself is very difficult under the circumstances. It is not good enough to have a Committee which exists on sufferance of people who are not considered responsible and whose chief title to prominence has been criticism of what they consider the 'right'. Such a Committee will inspire confidence in no one, left or right. It will either be thrown out or will fade into insignificance.

It is quite possible that with the development of the states' struggle, Vallabhbhai and even Gandhiji will get more and more involved in it. This will occupy the centre of the stage in Indian politics and a Working Committee, consisting of others, will function ineffectively and lose

3. Subhas Bose had said on 25 November 1938, that "...Taking into consideration the previous record of anti-Congress ministries, for instance, Assam, I feel sure that even a Congress coalition ministry will bring considerable benefit and will help keep in check the tide of communalism."

importance. During the last decade or more the Working Committee has occupied a very high position in India and even outside. Its decisions meant something, its word had power. It did not shout so much but there was strength and action behind what it said. I fear that many of our so-called leftists believe more in strong language than in anything else. I have no admiration whatever for the Nariman type of public worker and there are a good many of this type about.

We have got into an unhappy tangle and for the moment I see no obvious way out. I am prepared to try my best but the clarification and lead must come from you and then it is possible for others to decide as to whether they fit in or not. I suggest to you therefore to examine the position in all its implications, to consider the various problems referred to above, and to write a detailed note on them. This need not be published but it should be shown to those whom you invite to cooperate with you. Such a note will become the basis for discussion and this discussion will help us in finding a way out of the present impasse. Talks are not good enough, they are vague and often misleading and we have had enough of vagueness already. I should like you to develop your suggestion about giving an ultimatum to the British Government.<sup>4</sup> How exactly do you wish to proceed about it and what will you do afterwards? As I have told you, I do not appreciate this idea at all but it may be possible that if you develop it, I might be able to understand it better.

I have seen your statement in the press. It is too vague for me to grasp your position. Hence my request for a full elucidation.

Public affairs involve principles and policies. They also involve an understanding of each other and faith in the *bona fides* of colleagues. If this understanding and faith are lacking, it is very difficult to cooperate with advantage. As I have grown in years I have come to attach more and more importance to this faith and understanding between colleagues. What am I to do with the finest principles if I do not have confidence in the person concerned? The party rivalries in many provinces illustrate this and we find extreme bitterness and often an utter

4. In a speech at Jallianwalla Bagh on 1 December 1938, Subhas Bose had declared: "The moment has almost arrived in the history of our national movement, when we must present the British Government with an ultimatum and fix a time-limit—by no means long but say one month, two months, or at the most six months—during which period they must fulfil our national demand for complete independence.

In the event of our demand not being conceded we must be ready for uniform and organised mass action for bringing to a complete standstill the foreign rule in the country and paralysing the governing machinery...."



lack of scruples among people who are ordinarily honourable and straight. I cannot stomach this kind of politics and I have kept absolutely aloof from them for these many years. I function individually without any group or any second person to support me, although I am happy enough to possess the confidence of many. I feel that this provincial deterioration is now being transferred or extended to the all-India plane. This is a matter of the most serious concern to me.

So we come back to this: behind the political problem, there are psychological problems, and these are always more difficult to handle. The only way to do so is perfect frankness with each other and I hope therefore that all of us will be perfectly frank.

I do not expect you to answer this letter immediately. It will take a few days. But I would like you to send me an acknowledgement.

Yours affly.,  
Jawahar

#### 4. The Re-election of Subhas Bose<sup>1</sup>

I have refrained from issuing statements or saying much about the situation created by the Congress presidential contest as I wished to avoid doing anything which might further complicate an already complex situation. Ordinarily, in a static period, such a contest or its natural consequences would not have mattered much as all democratic organisations have to pass through them from time to time. But the ever-deepening international crisis and the rapid trend of public affairs in India towards a deadlock force us to think in other terms. My own mind has been dominated by this thought and I have therefore tried, in so far as lay in my power, to prevent anything happening which might come in the way of our offering a united and determined front. It was because of this that I was opposed to Subhas Babu's re-election as I knew the consequences that would flow from it. It is difficult and perhaps not desirable to enter into the various reasons which led me to this conclusion. But I should like to make it clear that they had nothing to do with right or left. In the course of the election campaign Subhas

1. Statement to the press, Wardha, 22 February 1939. *The Hindu*, 23 February 1939. Reprinted in *The Unity of India*, (London, 1941), pp. 132-135.

Babu made certain statements about his colleagues in the Working Committee which astonished and pained me.<sup>2</sup> So far as I know there was no basis for them. If there was any truth in them then those who were guilty of the activities mentioned, or even those who passively supported them, were unworthy of guiding the destinies of the Congress. If the statements and allegations were not true, then the least that could be done was to withdraw them unconditionally. There was no middle course. It was highly improper for our Congress affairs, at the very top, to be conducted in an atmosphere of mutual suspicion and lack of faith. I suggested to the Congress President that this was the first and most essential point to be considered but no attempt has so far been made to deal with it.

I further suggested to Subhas Babu that in view of the vague and unjustified use of the words, left and right, it was desirable for him to define exactly in writing, to help consideration and discussion, what policy he advocated both in national and international affairs. I had found myself in disagreement with his views in some important matters and I felt that clarification was necessary. Unfortunately no such clarification has taken place and his sudden and regrettable illness has prevented us from discussing these matters with him.

As there seems to be a great deal of misapprehension in the public mind and the Tripuri session is at hand, I feel compelled to issue this statement, especially as the Working Committee has not met and is not going to meet. This Committee has for the time being ceased to be and the President, as he probably wishes, has a free hand to frame and put forward his proposals before the Congress. In accordance with his desire, no meeting was held here even to transact routine business. In view of these developments I fear I cannot be of help to him even in my individual capacity. We cannot consider resolutions in the air, we have to see the background and the surrounding circumstances and I find all these factors to be most uninviting. There is a tendency also for local Congress disputes to be dealt with not in the usual routine way but directly from the top with the result that particular groups and parties are favoured and confusion is increased and Congress work suffers. For many years I have been associated with the Congress head-

2. For instance, in a statement on 24 January 1939, Subhas Bose had said : "It is widely believed that there is a prospect of a compromise on the Federal Scheme between the right wing of the Congress and the British Government during the coming year. Consequently, the right wing do not want a leftist President who may be a thorn in the way of a compromise and may put obstacles in the path of negotiations."



quarters office as working secretary or as President and have come into intimate touch with its work. It pains me to see that in the very heart of our organisation new methods are being introduced which can only lead to local conflicts spreading to higher planes.

In spite of my long association with the Congress I have never been closely associated with any particular group in it, though I have had the privilege of cooperating with all kinds of people. I have been an individual in this great organisation and that is always a difficult task. Often I have felt that I was a square peg in a round hole. During the years of my office I have frequently been on the verge of resigning because I felt that I could serve the Congress better if I did not have the responsibility of office. But I refrained from doing so as I was firmly convinced that in the dynamic and critical times we live in, we must present a united front and subordinate our individual opinions where these tended to impair that front. I have been and am a convinced socialist and a believer in democracy and have at the same time accepted whole-heartedly the peaceful technique of nonviolent action which Gandhiji has practised so successfully during the past twenty years. I am convinced that strength can only come to us from the masses, but that strength, either for struggle or for the great work of building a new world, must be a disciplined and orderly strength. It is not out of chaos or the encouragement of chaotic forces that we can fashion the India of our dreams. It is true that sometimes even chaos has given birth to a dancing star, but its usual progeny are suffering and degradation and internecine conflict and reaction. Today we have the strength, if we know how to use it, to march in a disciplined and orderly way to freedom. We are no weaklings today, the victims of an ignoble fate. Why then should we act as such?

In the past I have often felt that I should not belong to the Working Committee. Under present circumstances this conviction is all the stronger for I do not think I can accept the responsibilities of this high position in the background and the atmosphere of today, more especially after the presidential election. I agree with those who think that it is only fair that the President should be free to follow his policy and should choose his colleagues from among those who agree with this policy.

As this internal crisis has come upon us we should try to profit by it by clearing our minds and analysing the situation fully. We have had enough of vague phrases and hackneyed words. I do not think we need be anxious about the future if we are wise enough to learn from the present. If crisis comes we should all be prepared to face it together as we have done in the past.

## 5. Where Are We ?<sup>1</sup>

The sun was setting as I trudged back, with Kripalani for my companion, along the dusty road from Segaon to Wardha. We had met and parted that evening of the 22nd of February at Segaon, those of us who had for so long been the members of the Working Committee of the Congress, and the long argument was over. There was a relief from the tension of indecision, but the relief did not bring peace of mind or freedom from apprehension. We wandered about the *Ashram* in no great hurry to go back for our work for the moment was over. Meanwhile our colleagues took possession of the two cars and rolled away to Wardha, each carload imagining that we were in the other car. So we were stranded in Segaon. For an hour we waited and played with the children at the basic school nearby, but no car came and we decided to walk back the five miles to Wardha.

How many times I had gone along that dusty path during the past three years, mostly by automobile, sometimes by bullock-cart, once or twice on foot. The scene was a familiar one, with the bare arid plain stretching on every side and hardly a tree in sight. Yet it seemed different, perhaps because I myself had changed and looked at it with different eyes. The sun hung like a ball of fire on the horizon and beauty filled the silent air, but I was in no mood for beauty and felt weary and depressed. Loneliness gripped me in that empty plain and the lengthening shadows seemed ominous. We walked silently, for neither of us was in a mood for conversation. I was walking away not from Segaon but from something bigger, more vital, that had been part of me these many years.

The newspapers say that I have resigned from the Working Committee. That is not quite correct and yet it is correct enough. When twelve members had resigned from a Committee of fifteen, there was not much of the Committee left; the rump could hardly function as such.<sup>2</sup> The

1. Eight articles printed in the *National Herald* on 28 February and 1-6 March 1939 respectively. Later reprinted as a pamphlet, and included in *The Unity of India*, (London, 1941), pp. 86-132.
2. On 22 February 1939, Vallabhbhai Patel and eleven other members of the Congress Working Committee tendered their resignations to the Congress President and requested him to "select a homogeneous cabinet representing the majority."



reasons that impelled me to act as I did differed in many ways from those that moved my colleagues. But apart from reasons, I felt an overwhelming desire to be out of committees and to function as I wanted to, without let or hindrance. It was easy enough to resign from a dying Committee whose days were numbered, but the problem in my mind was a deeper one and the step I took would mean a break from many other contacts. To the onlookers, I had aligned myself along with the resigning twelve. And so I had. And yet in my mind the gulf between them and me had grown and not again would I be a member of a Committee fashioned as the Working Committee had been for three years.

It surprises me that some people should criticise these resignations. There was no other possible course open to these members, or at any rate to several of them, after the charges that had been made against them. Ordinarily, if it was felt that the policy they represented was not approved by the majority, they had to resign. But in the present instance certain grave personal charges were also made against them, and it was quite impossible for them to continue so long as those charges remained. In effect, these charges might be considered to be made against Gandhiji himself as he had been the guide and mentor of the Working Committee. This psychological and personal aspect inevitably overshadowed even the political issues, and I suggested therefore to the Congress President to clear this obstacle before tackling other problems. Unhappily he did not do so. To add to this difficulty the President sent a telegram<sup>3</sup> asking for a postponement of the Working Committee and not permitting it to transact even routine business. It was clear that under the circumstances the Committee had ceased to be.

A great organisation has something impersonal about it, although it might be powerfully impressed by a dominant personality. It carries on though persons may come or go. The Congress has demonstrated this impersonal aspect in a unique manner during past years, when repeatedly all its leaders and principal workers were in prison and the whole might of the law was directed against it. Yet it carried on and showed that sure sign of inner strength which is not daunted by adversity or crisis.

It was obvious that the Working Committee could not and should not, under the existing circumstances, decide any controversial matter of importance or attempt to frame resolutions for the Congress subjects committee. In the absence of the President this would have been improper, and every member present realised this fully. But it was in the fitness

3. Bose telegraphed to Mahatma Gandhi on 21 February 1939 that he was too ill to attend the Working Committee meeting at Wardha and desired the Committee to meet before the Tripuri Congress.

of things that routine matters, and especially those demanding urgency, in view of the approaching Congress session, should be disposed of. But the President's instructions seemed to come in the way, though whether he meant his words to be interpreted so literally I do not know. And so the Committee, having no function to perform, dissolved and faded away. For the first time the Congress had not functioned impersonally.

When the scales are evenly balanced even a little makes a difference, and the President's telegram made a difference. Ordinarily the democratic way was for the old Committee to resign after the presidential election and all that had happened in the course of it, so as to enable a new and more representative Committee to be formed. But the rapid development of an internal and external crisis and the possibility of another struggle on a vast scale overshadowed the usual processes of democracy and made the decision difficult. When, however, it appeared to the members present that there was no confidence in them even in regard to routine matters, the possibility of cooperation in a small executive became remote. The personal element was displacing the impersonal character of the organisation. Personal loyalties began to count more than loyalty to the organisation.

But this was a small matter after all and would not have counted for much if the surrounding circumstances had been different. It led me to think of a defect in our present constitution which leaves the old Working Committee to function with the new President. It would be far better if the Committee's term expired with the presidential election and the President met the Congress with a new Committee. The proceedings of the Congress would then be in the nature of a vote of confidence in this Committee. Under the present constitution the Committee is constituted after the Congress is over and it is quite possible that it might not truly represent the Congress.

And so, with all manner of thoughts surging in my mind, I walked back to Wardha town from Segaon. I had sided with my old colleagues of the Committee on the issue of the moment, for that was the only right course for me, but my parting was with them more than with others. In their letter of resignation they had stated that "the time has come when the country should have a clear-cut policy not based on compromise between incompatible groups of the Congress." If that was to be their clear-cut policy, I had no place with them.



## II

If the Working Committee was to consist solely of people believing in a clear-cut policy, where did I come in? Of course, the Committee must be homogeneous and capable of functioning as a unit or else it would be ineffective. It must believe generally in one line of action. But if the homogeneity was to be interpreted in a sectarian sense, then a future Committee would be very different from the Committees that have functioned during the past twenty years. Where would Deshbandhu Das or my father or Maulana Mahomed Ali have been under the new interpretation? They would have found no place in the Working Committee. In the early days of the Swaraj Party vital differences arose even as regards the policy to be pursued. There was an attempt to form a 'homogeneous' Committee but it failed soon afterwards, and the Congress reverted to a joint Committee consisting of representatives of the two principal groups in it. They functioned effectively for a number of years in spite of a difference of outlook. Any other course would have led to ineffectiveness and continuing conflict between the two groups and the weakening of the Congress.

If a new principle was now followed, odd individuals like me would be out of place in the Committee. I would not fit in with the old Committee which I knew; still less would I fit in with a new Committee which I did not know. My not being in the Working Committee would not of course mean that I sulked or held aloof. In any event, I would, as would others, offer such cooperation as was possible and not obstruct in any way.

I am convinced that the right course for the Congress is to avoid sectarianism and this narrow so-called homogeneity, for this would lead to the growth of conflict and the spirit of opposition within the Congress. It is for the Congress to lay down its policy clearly and to ask for a strict adherence to it by its executive. Within the four corners of this there must be homogeneity, but any attempt to narrow this still further would result in the exclusion of vital elements.

This policy of a joint front, though inevitable for us under the circumstances, has its disadvantages, as it leads to a feeling of suppression in the two or more groups that cooperate together. Each feels that it cannot have its way and that its progress is obstructed by the other group. This feeling of suppression has grown during the past few years, and so it is perhaps desirable to have executives consisting of one group only in order to give them full play. In effect, this will make little difference as there is not too much choice of policies and soon after there is bound

to be a reversion to the joint Committee, which alone can be really representative of the Congress and the country.

One need not therefore take the present deadlock in the Congress too tragically, unfortunate as it is. It is a sign of the growth of our movement and it mirrors the ideological conflicts that are troubling the minds of large numbers of our people. But everybody knows that in any action that might have to be undertaken we hold together and a crisis, national or international, will find us united.

What is unfortunate is the manner in which this deadlock has come about, for it represents no clear conflict of ideals or policy. It is the outcome of a desire to control the Congress organisation, whatever the policy. There has been a certain reaction against what was considered an authoritarian tendency in the Congress High Command, and yet curiously enough the new leadership is far more authoritarian than any during the recent history of the Congress. A radical policy for the Congress one can understand whether one approves of it or not. A line of action can be judged and accepted or rejected. But radical slogans allied to authoritarianism is a wrong and dangerous trend. It is wrong because it leads people to think that strong language and much shouting are substitutes for action. It is dangerous because radical slogans delude the people and under their cover authoritarianism creeps in and entrenches itself. I do not think there is any chance of the Congress going this way for we are too much wedded to democratic processes, and we have, these many years, discarded the tyranny of strong language, which enervates, in favour of action that is effective and that strengthens. Yet we may not grow complacent, for recent years have brought strange happenings in Europe, and we have seen the proud edifice of democracy fall before our eyes. Regretfully we recognise how easy it is to wean away a muddle-headed and confused public and then to drive it towards wrong ends.

Therefore it becomes vitally necessary for us to be clear about our policy and our methods, to define with precision our attitude to national and international problems. The world changes and new problems arise, new questions have to be answered, and the well-worn and hackneyed phrases of yesterday may have little meaning today. We live in the post-Munich age and the map changes from day to day and barbarism and black reaction triumph. Even as I write my mind is filled with that supreme tragedy of our time—the murder of Spanish democracy. It was not the rebels who killed republican Spain or traitors' hands that did it. Nor was it ultimately done to death by the fascist powers, much as they tried to do so. Britain and France must be held responsible for this,



as for the betrayal of Czechoslovakia, and history long ages hence will remember this infamy and will not forgive them. The infinite sadness in the looks of the Czechs and the Spaniards, whom they deserted and betrayed and, in the guise of friendship and impartiality, drove to death and slavery, will haunt them from generation to generation.

This is the world we live in. And in India also the problems that are arising are perilously like those in Europe. While we think still in terms of a straight fight against British imperialism, that imperialism changes its shape, and, not so sure of its strength, tries to meet the challenge indirectly and more dangerously. Reaction itself talks a different language, and, using progressive phrases, exploits the unpolitical masses for its own ends. Communalism becomes even more definitely the citadel of the reactionary and the bulwark of imperialism.

Phrases and slogans have become dangerous companions in these days unless they are allied to clear thought and well-considered objectives and methods. Most of us seldom take the trouble to think. It is a troublesome and fatiguing process and often leads us to uncomfortable conclusions. But crises and deadlocks when they occur have at least this advantage, that they force us to think. Let us then profit in this way in our present impasse.

It is for this reason that I am venturing to put forward some thoughts and experiences of mine. In a changing and uncertain situation it is difficult for me to point with any confidence to a way out of the deadlock. It may be that this way will show itself sooner than people imagine. Meanwhile it might be worthwhile for me to trace the various tendencies that have developed in India during the last three years. In doing so I crave the indulgence of my colleagues of the old Working Committee, for it may be necessary for me to refer to certain happenings with which they are connected and which have so far been treated as confidential. I hope I shall not thereby abuse their confidence.

### III

In March three years ago I flew back to India from Europe, President-elect of the Congress. My views and opinions were well known, and I was to some extent entitled to presume that the Congress electorate had expressed their approval of them. But I knew well that I could not presume too much, for elections are often governed by other considerations. No one could say that the Congress had turned socialist because the delegates had elected me their President. But this election did mean that there was a general desire for a more radical policy and that socialist ideas were spreading in the country. For the past year the Congress

had been rapidly recovering from the reaction that had set in on the withdrawal of civil disobedience. The elections to the central assembly had helped the process and the more radical elements were chafing at the inactivity of the organisation.

An organised socialist wing had grown up and with the intemperance and exuberance of youth, it criticised and condemned the leaders of the Congress. It spoke a language, borrowed from Western socialist literature, which was seldom understood by the rank and file of the Congress. And so though it won over some, it created a barrier against the many. The vast middle groups of the Congress, politically left, socially vague and undecided, but generally pro-peasant, looked askance at this new type of propaganda which attacked their leaders. Some socialists openly talked of replacing the old leadership, and evidently considered themselves as chosen by destiny for this purpose. They endeavoured to run their candidates for local Congress committees and the impression grew that they wanted to capture and control them. From a democratic point of view they were entitled to do so, but this very attempt and their methods turned against them and the middle groups of the Congress lined themselves up in an opposing camp. Thus the very people to whom socialism should have appealed were pushed away and made hostile. The socialist group, instead of being the crusaders for a new idea, became to some extent a sect seeking power and creating opposition among those who did not fall in line with them. Under cover of socialism purely personal local groups were sometimes formed seeking office or positions of authority in the Congress.

The leaders of the Congress disapproved strongly of these developments. They disliked the intricate theories connected with socialism and thought that socialism was inevitably connected with violence, which was opposed to the basic principle of the Congress. Above all, they were irritated by the personal attacks and criticisms and sometimes reacted in kind.

I found this atmosphere of bitterness and conflict on my return. I was full at the time of the idea of popular fronts and joint fronts, which were being formed in some European countries. In Europe where class and other conflicts were acute, it had been possible for this cooperation on a common platform. In India these conflicts were still in their early stages and were completely overshadowed by the major conflict against imperialism. The obvious course was for all anti-imperialistic forces to function together on the common platform of the Congress. Socialism was a theoretical issue, except in so far as it affected the course of the struggle, till political freedom and power were gained. There could be



no socialism before independence. It was true that vital differences might arise in regard to the methods and the means, but I was not myself troubled greatly over this matter. I was convinced that the Congress technique of peaceful action was the right method and must be pursued not only as a superficial policy, but as a fundamentally sound method which would lead us to our goal.

Some socialists and Marxists, thinking in terms of Europe and its pacifists, tried to ridicule the method of nonviolence. I am no admirer of European pacifists and crisis after crisis has shown them to be not only totally ineffective but often the unconscious tools of reaction and even war-mongering. Theirs has been the negative, passive attitude which surrenders to evil and violence because resistance would lead to a breach of their pacifist doctrine. Political surrender leads almost inevitably to moral surrender also.

But the nonviolence of the Congress was the very opposite of this and the basis of it was no surrender, political or moral, to what it considered evil. It involves, as all policies do, the acceptance of compromises when circumstances dictate them, but essentially, perhaps, it is more uncompromising than other policies. It is dynamic and not passive; it is not non-resistance but resistance to wrong-doing, though that resistance is peaceful. In practice it had proved remarkably successful, not only in achieving visible results, but also in the far more important task of strengthening the morale of the nation and training the people for peaceful, disciplined and united action.

Almost everybody, including the socialists, accepted this as the national policy and realised that there was no alternative. It is true that some did so rather mechanically without accepting its implications and sometimes not acting wholly in accordance with it. So far as I was concerned I had no difficulty in accepting it, although it was no article of faith for me, nor could I say that it would be applicable under all circumstances. It applied fully to India and to our struggle and that was enough for me.

I decided to devote my energies towards bridging the gulf between the old leaders and the new socialist group. To some extent I was fitted for this task, as I had intimate contacts with both. I was convinced that India could not do without either of these groups, and there seemed to me no valid reason why there should not be the fullest cooperation between the two in the struggle against imperialism. The old leaders were tried men with prestige and influence among the masses and the experience of having guided the struggle for many years. They were not rightists by any means; politically they were far more left and they were confirmed anti-imperialists. Gandhiji, standing behind them and supporting them from outside the Congress organisation, was of course

a tower of strength to them and to the country. He continued to dominate the Indian scene and it was difficult to conceive of a big struggle without him. The socialists, though a small group and speaking for a minority, represented a vital and a growing section, and their influence was spreading, especially among the youth. I was akin to them in their ideology and their objectives, and to me and to many others they represented the future.

On the eve of the Lucknow Congress we met in the Working Committee and I was pleased and gratified at the adoption by this Committee of a number of resolutions that I sponsored, and which seemed to give a new tone and a more radical outlook to the Congress. This increased my confidence in my capacity to keep the various groups of the Congress together. But the proceedings of the Congress itself weakened this impression, and I realised some of the difficulties in store for me. The Congress rejected some of my important recommendations and gave its full support to the old leadership. I stood in a minority in the Congress, and doubts assailed me whether I should continue as President. The formation of the Working Committee distressed me still more, as it emphasised the limitations within which I had to function. In theory the Committee had to be nominated by me but I could not override the majority view of the Congress. I decided to resign from the presidentship<sup>4</sup> and my last words at the open session, as the Congress was concluding, were to the effect that, after the glory of the last few days, I was sinking back into oblivion.

#### IV

The Lucknow Congress was over and a Working Committee was announced. I had decided, after much mental conflict, not to resign, as the consequences of resignation were serious and the whole organisation might have been shaken up by it. I threw myself into the work before me and drew up schemes for developing the A.I.C.C. office and opening various departments in it. With these plans in my head, I went to the first meeting of the Working Committee. No questions of principle or high policy were involved and yet I was surprised to find that my proposals were viewed with suspicion by many of my colleagues. It was not that they objected to them but they did not know where these developments might lead to. After long and exhausting arguments, certain more or less routine proposals were agreed to which should not have taken more than a few minutes.

4. See *Selected Works*, Vol. 7, p. 264.



## Where are We?

I

The sun was setting as I huddled back, with briefcase for my companion, along the dusty road from Sagar to Wardha. We had not and parted that evening, <sup>of the 22nd</sup> February ~~at~~ at Sagar, and the those of us who had for as long been the members of the Working Committee of the Congress, and the long argument was over. There was a relief from the tension of indecision, but the relief did not bring ~~freedom~~ for peace of mind or freedom from apprehension. We wandered about the Ashram in no great hurry to go back for our work for the moment was over. Meanwhile our colleagues took possession of the two cars and rolled away to Wardha, each car-load imagining that we were in the other car. So we went <sup>and joined into the children at the Basai school</sup> stranded in Sagar. In an hour we waited, but no car came and we decided to walk back the fourteen five miles to Wardha.

How many times I had gone backward and forward along that dusty path during the past three years, mostly by an automobile, sometimes by bullock-cart, once or twice on foot. The scene was a familiar one, with the bare arid plain stretching on every side and hardly a tree in sight. Yet it seemed different, perhaps because I myself had changed and looked at it with different eyes. The sun hung like a ball of fire on the horizon and heavily ~~lay~~ <sup>filled</sup> the still air, but I was in no mood for beauty



WITH EGYPTIAN DELEGATION, TRIPURI CONGRESS, MARCH 1939



I undertook some tours and visited, among other places, Bombay. Everywhere I spoke about the Congress programme, as decided at Lucknow, and emphasized the need for strengthening the organisation. In the course of my speeches I laid stress on the poverty and unemployment in India and said that a true solution could only come through socialism. But there could be no socialism without independence, and all of us had therefore to concentrate on the latter. I met with an enthusiastic and overwhelming response everywhere.

Early in July 1936, there was another meeting of the Working Committee and I went to it heartened by the enthusiasm I had met with. To my surprise and dismay I found that some of my colleagues did not share this and they were full of apprehension at the developments that were taking place. They offered their resignations from the Working Committee. (Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was one of the absentees from this meeting.) I was stunned. It appeared that they were deeply hurt at what they considered was a regular and continuous campaign against them, treating them as persons whose time was over, who represented ideas that were worn out, and who were obstructing the progress of the country. I was of course not said to be a party to such a campaign, but my ideological sympathy with some of those who indulged in it was taken to be as passive support of it.

All this surprised me greatly. There had been some foolish and objectionable speeches and statements by odd individuals, but that was no sufficient reason for the offer to resign. Perhaps it was the long background of bitterness and conflict which influenced my colleagues, although this was improving rapidly. To some extent there was a feeling that the Congress Socialist Party was not playing fair. Three of their number were in the Working Committee and yet the party continued in a sense to play the part of an opposition. But the dominating reason at the time was, I think, a feeling that my speeches might scare away voters and thus affect adversely the general elections that were coming. Later it was realised that I was a fairly efficient election winner.

Owing to the intervention of Gandhiji the resignations were withdrawn, but I returned from Wardha in a depressed frame of mind. I felt that I should resign and place the whole matter before the A.I.C.C. so that suitable arrangements could be made for future work. I sent a long letter<sup>5</sup> to Gandhiji from Allahabad from which I give some extracts below :

5. See *Selected Works*, Vol. 7, pp. 309-313.

Ever since I left Wardha I have been feeling weak in body and troubled in mind. Partly this is no doubt due to physical causes—a chill which has aggravated my throat trouble. But partly also it is due to other causes which touch the mind and the spirit directly. Since my return from Europe I have found that meetings of the Working Committee exhaust me greatly; they have a devitalizing effect on me, and I have almost the feeling of being much older in years after every fresh experience. I should not be surprised if this feeling was also shared by my colleagues of the Committee. It is an unhealthy experience and it comes in the way of effective work.

I was told, when I returned from Europe, that the country was demoralized and hence we had to go slow. My own little experience during the past four months has not confirmed this impression. Indeed, I have found a bubbling vitality wherever I have gone, and I have been surprised at the public response.... I am grateful to you for all the trouble you took in smoothing over matters and in helping to avoid a crisis. I was convinced then, and I am convinced now, that a break of the kind suggested would have had serious consequences for all our work, including the elections. And yet, and yet, where are we now and what does the future hold for us?.... I have written at length, both in my book and subsequently, about my present ideas. Those views are not casual. They are part of me and, though I might change them or vary them in future, so long as I hold them I must give expression to them. Because I attached importance to a larger unity I tried to express them in the mildest way possible and more as an invitation to thought than as fixed conclusions. I saw no conflict in this approach and in anything that the Congress was doing....

With the fixed intention of resigning and leaving the matter to the A.I.C.C. which was meeting next month in Bombay, I left for Sind. News reached me there of the Spanish revolt, and I was greatly affected by it. I saw this rising developing into a European or even a world conflict. Crises on the biggest scale seemed to be at hand and India's part in these was to me a vital matter. Was I going to weaken our organisation and create an internal crisis by resigning just when it was essential for us to pull together? My mind became tense with expectation and all thought of resignation left it.

In Bombay the Working Committee drafted the election manifesto and this, curiously enough, was agreed to without much argument. A new atmosphere of cooperation surrounded us and the tension seemed to lessen. As a colleague remarked with pleasure, it was like old times again.



As the elections approached, all of us plunged into the campaign and our internal conflicts vanished for the moment. For many months I wandered about India and millions of faces passed before my eyes. I saw a thousand facets of this country of mine in all their rich diversity, and yet always with the unifying impress of India upon them. I sought to understand what lay behind those millions of eyes that stared at me, what hopes and desires, what untold sorrow and misery unexpressed. Glimpses came to me that illumined my vision and made me realise the immensity of the problem of the hundreds of millions of our people.

The elections over, the A.I.C.C. decided to accept office subject to certain conditions. The period of the interim ministries intervened. Then the Congress took office in a number of provinces, and this by itself released mass energy, and both the kisan and the worker woke up and began to play an aggressive role. New problems arose and internal conflicts, which had so far been largely ideological, took new shape. No one, not even the opponents of office acceptance, wanted to create crises for the Congress ministries. But there was a continuous attempt to bring pressure upon them by strikes and kisan manifestations which embarrassed the ministries greatly. In Bihar the kisan movement came into conflict with the Congress organisation. Elsewhere also the high hopes that had been raised by the advent of the Congress ministries not being fulfilled, dissatisfaction arose. The machinery of government was working in much the same way as of old, although various reforms had been introduced. In Madras especially the Congress government functioned in some ways perilously like the old government.

To some extent this was inevitable as the old steel frame was still there circumscribing and restricting the activities of the provincial governments. But it was felt in ever-widening circles in the Congress that the ministries could have functioned more effectively in accordance with our principles and that they were growing too complacent. There was not the full cooperation between the ministries and the provincial Congress committees which was essential for effective progress, and various incidents occurred—the Nariman affair,<sup>6</sup> the Batlivala arrest<sup>7</sup>—which added to the internal conflict. It is difficult for me to deal with all these matters in the course of these brief articles, or else I shall continue to write on and take too long a time to reach the present stage. Still it is essential that the background of these incidents and of the Congress in 1937 should be kept in mind and I shall therefore deal with these in a subsequent article.

6. See *Selected Works*, Vol. 8, pp. 278-279.

7. See *Selected Works*, Vol. 8, p. 360.

The vague but general feeling of dissatisfaction took some shape in the A.I.C.C. meeting in October 1937, and found moderate expression. Long-continued repression in Mysore state was also greatly resented, and a resolution, which was not happily worded, was passed.<sup>8</sup> These resolutions, and especially the Mysore one, were disapproved of by many members of the Working Committee, and Gandhiji, who was seriously ill at the time, was upset by them. He expressed himself at a meeting of the Working Committee in language unusually strong for him and condemned artificial combinations in the Congress. This could not go on, he said, and the organisation must be one from top to bottom. He said that he would have to withdraw completely unless a change was made in the Congress and this drift stopped. What exactly he wanted done was not clear to me but what was clear was that he strongly disapproved of what I had done. I suggested that the A.I.C.C. should be recalled as a crisis seemed imminent. Later it was decided to carry on as we were doing for the time being.

In the columns of the *Harijan*, Gandhiji criticised the Mysore resolution and stated that it was *ultra vires* of the A.I.C.C., which meant that he condemned my action in allowing it to be discussed.<sup>9</sup> This amazed me for I was and am convinced that from a constitutional and legal point of view Gandhiji was wrong. I wrote to him and to the members of the Working Committee on the subject and intended issuing a press statement, but ultimately refrained from doing so in order to avoid a public controversy.<sup>10</sup> But more and more I felt that I could not carry on as a responsible member of the executive. I decided not to do anything to precipitate a crisis but to drop out of the executive at the next Congress session which was approaching. I informed Gandhiji and some of my colleagues accordingly and wrote to the same effect to Subhas Babu who was in Europe then. (He had not been formally elected President then, although his election was certain.)

At Haripura we had suddenly to face the ministerial crisis in the U.P. and Bihar, and my decision not to belong to the Working Committee was shaken. Another consideration which affected me was that my not joining the Working Committee might be looked upon as if I was not desirous of giving my full cooperation to Subhas Babu. This had of course nothing to do with my decision, but I could not go about explaining this to everybody. I decided to join the Working Committee.

8. See *Selected Works*, Vol. 8, p. 572.

9. See *Selected Works*, Vol. 8, p. 567.

10. See *Selected Works*, Vol. 8, pp. 567-569 and 571-572.



But I was ill at ease, and in April 1938, I wrote to Gandhiji.<sup>11</sup> I give some extracts from my letter :

As you know I have been greatly distressed at the turn events have taken in Congress politics during the last six months. Among the matters that have disturbed me is the new orientation of the Gandhi Seva Sangh... It is distressing to find that even the Gandhi Seva Sangh, which might have set a standard to others and refused to become a party organisation intent on winning elections, had descended to the common level. I feel strongly that the Congress ministries are working inefficiently and not doing much that they could do. They are trying to adapt themselves far too much to the old order and trying to justify it. But all this, bad as it is, might be tolerated. What is far worse is that we are losing the high position that we have built up, with so much labour, in the hearts of the people. We are sinking to the level of ordinary politicians...

Partly, of course, this is due to a general deterioration all over the world, partly to the transition period through which we are passing. Nevertheless, it does show up our failings and the sight is painful. I think there are enough men of goodwill in the Congress to cope with the situation if they set about it in the right way. But their minds are full of party conflicts and the desire to crush this individual or that group. Obviously bad men are preferred to good men because the former promise to toe the party line. When this happens there is bound to be deterioration.

For months past I have felt that I could not function effectively in India as things were going. I have carried on of course as one can always carry on. But I have felt out of place and a misfit. This was one reason (though there were others also) why I decided to go to Europe. I felt I could be more useful there, and in any event I would freshen up my tired and puzzled mind....

In this letter I have referred to the Gandhi Seva Sangh. On subsequent inquiry I found that there was no such political orientation at the top as I had been led to believe. The fault lay with certain individuals in local areas who tried to exploit Gandhiji's name as well as that of the Sangh in Congress elections.

## V

The working of provincial autonomy, restricted as it was, had many dangers for us. It tended to emphasise, as it was no doubt meant to,

11. See *Selected Works*, Vol. 8, pp. 387-389.

provincialism and diverted our anti-imperialist struggle into narrower channels. Because of this, internal conflicts grew—communal, social, and organisational. The major problems of poverty, unemployment, the land, industry, clamoured for solution, and yet they could not be solved within the framework of the existing constitution and economic structure. The only course open to us was to go as far as we could towards this solution—it was not very far—and to relieve somewhat the burdens on the masses, and at the same time to prepare ourselves to change that constitution and structure. A time was bound to come when we had exhausted the potentialities of this constitution, and we had to choose between a tame submission to it and a challenge to it. Both involved a crisis. For if we submitted, the major problems, finding no solution or outlet, would overwhelm us. If we did not—and we had no intention of doing so—a conflict with British imperialism was inevitable unless the latter surrendered, which it was not likely to do. There was an odd possibility, however, that if the national movement grew powerful enough, and in view of the critical situation, we might gain our objective without a major struggle.

Our strength had certainly increased greatly, and in spite of internal conflicts and sometimes bogus membership, there is no doubt that the Congress is a more powerful organisation today than at any previous period of its history. The masses are more politically awake than ever before. Yet these very signs of strength may turn against us if they are not organised and directed into right channels. For the moment I am not considering the communal problem, in spite of its obvious importance and its repercussions on our national struggle. We had to deal with, both in the organisation and in the provincial governments, the coordination of the political struggle with the social and economic problems of the masses. Failure to integrate the two meant weakness and a growing paralysis. On the one hand, we had to keep our struggle predominantly political and anti-imperialistic; on the other, we had to go as far as we possibly could in the direction of social advance. Above all, it was essential that the Congress must continue to be a disciplined, well-knit organisation, keeping the various aspects of the struggle well under control. If the Congress weakened there was no possibility of effective struggle for us.

As I have indicated, I was dissatisfied with the progress made by the Congress ministries. It is true that they had done good work, their record of achievement was impressive, the ministers were working terribly hard and yet had to put up with all manner of attacks and criticisms, often based on ignorance. Theirs was a thankless job. Still, I felt that progress was slow and their outlook was not what it should be.



Nor was I satisfied with the approach of the Congress leadership to the problems that faced us. It was not so much a question of difference of opinion as of emphasis, though there was difference of opinion also sometimes. What alarmed me was a tendency to put down certain vital elements which were considered too advanced or which did not quite fit in with the prevailing outlook. This was a dangerous drift, though it had not gone far, and it reminded me of the fate of the German Social Democrats and the British Labour Party.

It is true that some of the so-called leftist elements in the Congress had not behaved with responsibility and had deliberately encouraged tendencies which could only lead to internal conflict and the weakening of the Congress. Their idea of a joint front was to have the full protection of the Congress, the advantage of its prestige, and yet to attack it and criticise it from outside. The red flag, perfectly justified in its own sphere, became often a challenge to the national flag. The kisan sabha frequently functioned as a permanent opposition to the local Congress committee and sometimes demonstrations were organised which could only lead to friction and irritation. Much of this took place in the lower ranks, but even the kisan sabha leadership was quite astonishingly irresponsible. In the villages, all manner of undesirables, who had found no place in the local Congress or were otherwise disgruntled elements, found shelter in a local kisan sabha. Even politically reactionary elements sometimes utilised the kisan sabha to weaken the Congress.

All this led to petty conflicts, and what was worse, a growing spirit of indiscipline in the Congress. If this had represented the growth of an organised and disciplined left, it would have been a healthy sign, whether one agreed with it or not. In effect it represented a healthy awakening of the masses which was being exploited by numerous mutually differing groups among those who called themselves the leftists. For a considerable time the conflict among the leftist groups themselves absorbed most of their energy.

Gandhiji was not interested in these ideological conflicts, but, with his extraordinary capacity to sense a situation, he felt that indiscipline was growing rapidly and chaotic forces were being let loose. He was thinking more and more in terms of a great struggle with British imperialism, and indiscipline could not be the prelude to this. I was myself distressed by this development. It reminded me of various unfortunate stages of the Chinese revolution, and I had no desire to see India go through that chaotic process.

The Nariman episode of 1937 and the Khare incident<sup>12</sup> of 1938 were

12. See p. 90.

symptomatic of this spirit of indiscipline. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel was held to blame for both these most unjustly when the responsibility for them was fully shared by all the members of the Working Committee. As President of the Congress I was intimately connected with every step that was taken with reference to Mr. Nariman. President Subhas Bose was equally responsible for the decision regarding Dr. Khare.

I think that there has been a certain tendency towards authoritarianism in the Congress. It might have been toned down, but to some extent it was inevitable when discipline was essential for us and there was danger of our far-flung organisation going to pieces without it. Probably what was objected to was more the manner of doing than the thing done. In any event it was fantastic and absurd to talk about Congress fascism because of what was done to Mr. Nariman or Dr. Khare. Politically speaking and from the Congress point of view, what Dr. Khare did was unpardonable. He intrigued with the Governor behind the backs of, and on the eve of, the Working Committee in order to present them with an accomplished fact. If that was permitted then all control over Congress ministries vanished and Congress ministers became a law unto themselves.

Mr. Nariman invited trouble. He seemed to consider it his birth-right to be made the leader of the party and when this did not happen, he started an agitation which continued for many months. This agitation amazed and astounded me. I had known Mr. Nariman fairly intimately ever since he joined the Congress in the twenties. I had seen him function in times of peace and in times of struggle and had formed some opinion of his virtues and his weaknesses. If I had been a voter for this purpose, I would not have voted for him to be appointed leader, as I did not think that he could have shouldered this burden adequately. Subsequent events have only confirmed this opinion and I have been surprised at the lack of responsibility he has shown.

But in any event, even if he was the better or more suitable person, the agitation which he and his supporters carried on was indefensible. Most unfortunate of all was the communal turn that was given to it. Similarly, in Dr. Khare's case an attempt was made to rouse Maharashtra sentiment against the Congress.

There has been a great deal of talk of democracy being suppressed in the Nariman and Khare episodes. I presume those who say so have not troubled to study the facts, or else our conceptions of democracy differ very greatly. It is easy to sneer and be sarcastic, and this seems the fashion today, not only among some Congressmen but among that large number who do little themselves but offer advice from a distance. I think that the Working Committee would have been completely failing



in their duty if they had not expressed themselves clearly on both these issues. Democracy does not simply mean shouting loudly and persistently, though that might occasionally have some value. Freedom and democracy require responsibility and certain standards of behaviour and self-discipline. Our struggle, more specially the type of struggle we are carrying on, requires all these qualities, and if we do not possess them in sufficient measure we risk failure.

The leftists, using the word correctly, stand for certain principles and policies. Inevitably they attract to their ranks all manner of people, both the finest type of crusading spirit and the intellectually and morally incompetent. If they do not take care they will be swamped by the latter, and lose the reputation that they should possess. It is not in indiscipline or in loose thinking or in irresponsible action that they will find success. The student world of India should be the nursery of new ideas and clear thinking and disciplined action. And yet unfortunately it often shows a lack of all the virtues that it should possess.

There is one matter I should like to refer to although it comes at a later stage in the narrative. This is the Trades Disputes Act of Bombay. It is one of my regrets that I was away from India when this was considered and passed. Perhaps, if I had been here I might have been able to have some changes made in it. The Act as a whole is decidedly a good measure but it has, according to my thinking, certain vital defects which affect the workers adversely and take away from the grace of the measure. The manner it was passed was also unfortunate. On the other hand, it was equally unfortunate for the workers' representatives to ally themselves with the declared opponents of the Congress and to exploit the situation to the detriment of the Congress. Another attitude and approach would have yielded better results.

The Congress ministries have certain definite and substantial achievements to their credit; they have failed in some ways. But one of their achievements which is full of promise is their new approach to mass education. The literacy campaigns have been good. More important and of fundamental significance is the new basic scheme of education which is based on the Zakir Hussain committee's report.<sup>13</sup> I have been deeply impressed by it and I think we have found the right method to educate the growing generation.

13. The committee, appointed in October 1937 at the instance of Mahatma Gandhi, recommended the following changes in the system of education: (1) productive activity in education; (2) correlation of the curriculum with productive activity and the physical and social environment, and (3) intimate contact between the school and the local community.

## VI

My visit to Europe last year coincided with a period of intense crisis in the international sphere, and I put myself psychologically in tune with this by going straight to Barcelona, that "flower of the fair cities of the world," as Cervantes<sup>14</sup> called it. Alas, that this flower should be crushed today and enemy hands should hold this ancient home of liberty, which struggled for freedom even in the days of Ferdinand and Isabella!<sup>15</sup> But when I visited this gracious city, it was still the home of the unconquerable spirit of man which knows no defeat and reckons death and disaster as of little account in freedom's cause. Nightly I saw the bombs fall from the air, raining death and destruction on the populace. I saw the hungry crowds in the streets, the plight of the refugees; I visited the armies at the front and those brave young men of the International Brigade, so many of whom rest for ever in the soil of Spain. I came back full of the tragedy of Spain, which was being strangled not so much by enemies, but by those who called themselves the friends of democracy.

Later I visited Czechoslovakia and saw yet another tragedy, yet another betrayal, unroll itself before my eyes. All these events impressed themselves powerfully upon me and I tried to understand our own struggle for freedom in relation to them. In this swift changing drama federation and many of the lesser problems of India seemed to lose importance. Bigger things were afoot and it was time that India also thought in terms of them.

I had gone to Europe in a personal capacity, but inevitably I had a certain representative character. In my public or private utterances I could not forget this, and I was anxious not to say or do anything which might embarrass my colleagues in India. I took care therefore to send full and detailed reports of all my political activities, public or private; I inquired if the line I had taken was the correct one, I asked for full directions and put questions to be answered. I sent several such reports and each one went to the Congress President, to the General Secretary of the Congress for the members of the Working Committee, and to Gandhiji. It was my misfortune that the President did not even acknowledge any of them, and consequently I received no directions from him. The General Secretary informed me that the members of the Working Committee generally approved of the attitude I had taken up. Gandhiji also expressed his approval.

14. Miguel de Cervantes (1547-1616); author of *Don Quixote*.

15. Ferdinand V (1452-1516); king of Sicily, married Isabella, sister of Henry IV of Castile and heiress to that throne in 1469.



It was obvious that in the course of a discussion or conversation it is not enough to speak in terms of a brief Congress resolution, although that must be the basis of the discussion. All manner of possibilities have to be investigated and various developments considered in the light of the Congress decision. The purely agitational attitude is not good enough for a detailed consideration of a subject. It was because of this that I wanted full instructions from the Congress leaders in India. My own general attitude was that the whole question of federation was out of date now and it was time that the Indian problem was solved by a constituent assembly drawing up a constitution.

I learnt that an attempt was being made behind the scenes in England to impress upon people that what I said about federation did not represent the Congress or Gandhiji and that it was Gandhiji who counted in the end. I wrote to the Working Committee about it,<sup>16</sup> as well as to Gandhiji. Gandhiji sent me a cable in reply expressing his agreement with what I had said, though his language might have been different. He wrote an article in the *Harijan* about that time to the same effect.<sup>17</sup>

The international crisis and the possibility of war also raised vital problems for us and I wanted directions from my colleagues at home. I got no directions from the President and little from the others in this matter. I felt from this and various other indications that the President did not wholly approve of the international policy I was advocating.

In view of the crisis and the rapid developments in Europe most of us, I suppose, were forced to think out afresh what their political faith should be. Perhaps this sense of crisis and tension was not so obvious in India and events did not compel us to examine our premises afresh. Our socialist friends in India have not reacted sufficiently to changing conditions. The communists in Europe might change, under the compulsion of events, but not so the communists of India.

I had been considerably upset by the course of events in the Soviet Union, the trials and the repeated purges of vast numbers of communists. I think the trials were generally *bona fide* and there had been a definite conspiracy against the regime and widespread attempts at sabotage. Nevertheless, I could not reconcile myself to what was happening there, and it indicated to me ill health in the body politic, which necessitated an ever-continuing use of violence and suppression. Still the progress made in the Russian economy, the advancing standards of the people, the great advance in cultural matters and many other things

16. See pp. 93-105 and 131-137.

17. Printed on 10 October 1938.

continued to impress me. I was eager to visit the Soviet Union but unfortunately my daughter's illness prevented me from going there.

Whatever doubts I had about internal happenings in Russia, I was quite clear in my mind about her foreign policy. This had been consistently one of peace and, unlike England and France, of fulfilling international obligations and supporting the cause of democracy abroad. The Soviet Union stood as the one real effective bulwark against fascism in Europe and Asia. Without the Soviet Union what would be the state of Europe today? Fascist reaction would triumph everywhere and democracy and freedom would become dreams of a past age.

On Spain, on Czechoslovakia, and right through the September crisis, the Communist Party seemed to me to take the straightest line.<sup>18</sup> Their analysis of the situation almost always turned out to be correct, and even when the nerves of most of the progressive groups were shattered, the communists, as a rule, kept their heads and continued to function. They had the capacity to learn from events and to shape their policy accordingly, unlike the British Labour Party which has shown an astounding inability to understand a changing world.

The events in Europe, the growth of fascism, the Spanish revolution, and most of all the deliberate encouragement of the Nazi and fascist powers by the so-called democratic governments of England and France, impressed upon me that the dominant urge of the owning classes is to protect their own vested interests. When nationalism means protection of their interests, then they are nationalists and patriots; but when these interests are endangered, then nationalism or patriotism has little value for them. The ruling classes of Britain and France are even prepared to endanger the security of their empires rather than cooperate for the defence of democracy with Soviet Russia, for such cooperation might release forces which would undermine their privileged position. Democracy means nothing to them, nor freedom, though they talk loudly of them; their main concern is the protection of their vested interests and privileges. That they might lose these anyhow, even by the policy they pursue, is their misfortune.

The Marxian philosophy appeals to me in a broad sense and helps me to understand the processes of history. I am far from being an orthodox Marxist, nor does any other orthodoxy appeal to me. But I am convinced that the old liberal approach in England or elsewhere is no longer valid. *Laissez faire* is dead, and unless far-reaching changes are made with reasonable speed, disaster awaits us, whether we live in England or India. Today the community has to be organised in order

18. The reference is to the British Communist Party.



to establish social and economic justice. This organisation is possible on the fascist basis, but this does not bring justice or equality, and is essentially unsound. The only other way is the socialist way.

Liberty and democracy have no meaning without equality, and equality cannot be established so long as the principal instruments of production are privately owned. Private ownership of these means of production thus comes in the way of real democracy. Many factors go to shape opinion, but the most important and fundamental of them is the property relation, which ultimately governs our institutions and our social fabric. Those who profit by an existing property relation do not, as a class, voluntarily agree to a change which involves a loss of power and privilege. We have reached a stage when there is an essential contradiction between the existing property relation and the forces of production, and democracy cannot effectively function unless this relation is transformed. Class struggles are inherent in the present system, for the attempt to change it and bring it in line with modern requirements meets with the fierce opposition of the ruling or owning classes. That is the logic of the conflicts of today, and it has little to do with the goodwill or ill will of individuals, who might in their individual capacities succeed in rising above their class allegiance. But the class as a whole will hold together and oppose change.

I do not see why under socialism there should not be a great deal of freedom for the individual; indeed, far greater freedom than the present system gives. He can have freedom of conscience and mind, freedom of enterprise, and even the possession of private property on a restricted scale. Above all, he will have the freedom which comes from economic security, which only a small number possess today.

I think India and the world will have to march in this direction of socialism unless catastrophe brings ruin to the world. That march may vary in different countries and the intermediate steps might not be the same. Nothing is so foolish as to imagine that exactly the same processes take place in different countries with varying backgrounds. India, even if she accepted this goal, would have to find her own way to it, for we have to avoid unnecessary sacrifice and the way of chaos, which may retard our progress for a generation.

But India has not accepted this goal, and our immediate objective is political independence. We must remember this and not confuse the issue, for else we will have neither socialism nor independence. We have seen that even in Europe the middle classes are powerful enough to suppress today any movement aiming at vital social change, and when danger threatens have a tendency to go to fascism. The middle classes in India are relatively at least as strong, and it would be the extremity

of folly to estrange them and force them into the opposing ranks. Our national policy must therefore be one which includes a great majority of them on the common basis of political independence and anti-imperialism, and our international policy must be one of anti-fascism.

Marxism and socialism are not policies of violence, though, like most other groups, capitalist or liberal, they envisage the possibility of violence. Can they fit in with the peaceful methods of the Congress, not only as a temporary expedient, but in a straight forward *bona fide* manner? It is not necessary for us to discuss the whole philosophy underlying the doctrine of nonviolence or to consider how far it is applicable to remote and extreme cases. For us the problem is that of India and of India of today and tomorrow. I am convinced that the way of nonviolence is not merely the only feasible course for us, but is, on its merits, the best and most effective method. I think that the field of its application will grow as its effectiveness is recognised. But here in India large numbers of people have recognised it, and it has become the solid foundation of our movement. It has proved effective enough already, but it is quite possible, with further experience, to extend its application in a variety of ways. It is easy to belittle it and point to its failures, but it is far easier to point out the innumerable failures of the method of violence. We have seen powerfully armed countries collapse and sink into servitude without a struggle. India, with all her lack of armed might, would never have succumbed in this way.

There are peculiar dangers in India in the use of the violent method. It cannot be used in a disciplined or organised manner. It will come in the way of mass organisation and mass action, and it is bound to lead to internal conflicts on a big scale, resulting in chaos and the collapse of our movement. I am not optimist enough to imagine that out of this chaos a free, united, and advanced India will emerge.

No one in India thinks in terms of this type of violence. It is out of the question. But there is a feeling that a violent mentality increases the militancy of the masses and is therefore to be vaguely encouraged among the industrial workers or even the kisans. This is folly, and if continued the consequences are likely to be disastrous. So long as a government deals gently with it, it flourishes, but a determined government can crush it easily and completely demoralise the workers. Strength comes not from occasional exhibitions of individual or group violence but from mass organisation and the capacity for mass action, which, to be effective in India, must be peaceful action.

In any event the fact remains that the Congress policy is a peaceful one, and if we adhere to it, we must do so fully and in all honesty. Not to do so is to fall between two stools. Any socialist or communist, who



pays lip service to nonviolence and acts differently, does injury to his ideals and makes people think that his acts do not conform to his professions.

## VII

We discuss our differences and sometimes over-emphasize them. Yet it is well to remember that our political movement for freedom has a fundamental unity, and all our differences of outlook and approach do not lessen this unity. That unity comes out most strikingly in times of struggle, but even at other times that unity is apparent. Our debates and arguments do not attack that unity; they are, in fact, based on that unity. This is natural enough, for under the circumstances the independence of India and anti-imperialism are the common urges which move vast numbers of our people.

Real disunity creeps in from the communal side, and we must recognise that there is an ideology, fostered by the principal communal organisations, which cuts at the root of national unity. Yet I do not think that this ideology has affected to any large extent even the members of the communal organisations. As soon as there is an improvement in the communal atmosphere this way of thinking will probably fade out.

So far as the Congress is concerned there is no such difficulty. The real difficulty is not so much in what we do or even in the resolutions we pass, but in our approach and interpretation. There are, as there must be in a vital organisation, numerous sets of opinions shading off into one another, and yet bound together by a common link. Broadly speaking, there are two divisions (and this has practically nothing to do with right or left): those who might be called the Gandhiites and those who consider themselves modernists. These words are not happy or precise, for they indicate that Gandhism is something ancient and out of date, while as a matter of fact it is very modern and perhaps to some extent in advance of our age. But it is different from the modernism of the West, and a certain religious or metaphysical tinge about it does not fit in with the spirit of science which represents the best of European thought today. There is little stress on the mind in it or on the processes of the mind, and too much on an intuitive and authoritarian interpretation. And yet there is no reason why the Gandhian technique should not be considered from a purely scientific point of view and made to fit in with this spirit of science.

The so-called modernists are a motley group: socialists of various kinds and odd individuals who talk vaguely of science and modern progress.

Many of these are relics of an out-of-date nationalism and have little to do with modernism or science.

These two broad divisions must not be confused with right and left. There are rightists and leftists in both groups, and there is no doubt that some of our best fighting elements are in the Gandhian group. If the Congress is looked upon from the right and left point of view, it might be said that there is a small rightist fringe, a left minority, and a huge intermediate group or groups which approximate to left-centre. The Gandhian group would be considered to belong to this intermediate left-centre group. Politically the Congress is overwhelmingly left; socially it has leftist leanings, but is predominantly centre. In matters affecting the peasantry it is pro-peasant.

In trying to analyse the various elements in the Congress, the dominating position of Gandhiji must always be remembered. He dominates to some extent the Congress, but far more so he dominates the masses. He does not easily fall in any group and is much bigger than the so-called Gandhian group. Sometimes he is the single-minded revolutionary going like the arrow to his goal and shaking up millions in the process. At other times he is static, or seemingly so, counselling others to prudence. His continuing ill health has brought a complicating factor in the situation. He cannot take full part in national affairs and is out of touch with many developments; and yet he cannot help taking part in them and giving a lead because of his own inner urge to do so and the demand of the people. It makes little difference whether he is formally connected with the Congress or not. The Congress of today is of his making, and he is essentially of it. In any event, the commanding position he has in the country has nothing to do with any office, and he will retain that dominating place in the hearts of the people so long as he lives, and afterwards. In any policy that might be framed he cannot be ignored. In any national struggle his full association and guidance are essential. India cannot do without him.

That is one of the basic factors of the situation. The conscious and thinking leftists in the country recognise it and, whatever their ideological or temperamental differences with him, have tried to avoid anything approaching a split. Their attempt has been to leave the Congress under its present leadership, which means under Gandhiji's guidance, and at the same time to push it as far as they could more to the left, to radicalize it, and to spread their own ideology.

If this is so during more or less normal periods, still more is Gandhiji's guidance necessary when crisis approaches. A split, or anything like it, at such a critical period when all our united strength is necessary would disable us and make us ineffective.



While Gandhiji and the old leaders of his group are essential for our national work and our struggle, it is becoming increasingly evident that without the active cooperation of other vital elements in the Congress and the country, they will be hampered and their work will be ineffective or, at any rate, less effective. This applies to the so-called modernist group within the Congress; it applies still more to a large but vague body of opinion in the country, and to most of the intelligentsia. It may not apply directly to the masses, but indirectly the masses are affected by others of this way of thinking.

Thus we arrive at the conclusion that the full cooperation of this modernist group is also essential for the successful functioning of the Congress. If *bona fide* cooperation between the two groups is lacking, it is difficult to think in terms of a struggle against the common opponent. There will then be no equilibrium in the Congress and our energies will be spent in internal conflict or, even if this is avoided, an atmosphere of mutual tension and want of confidence in each other will grow up, which is fatal for effective work. People at the top might behave and be tolerant of each other, but lower down in the organisation, indiscipline and conflict will be rampant. The Congress ministries will be greatly affected by this and might find it difficult to carry on. They have a difficult enough task in having to face the disruptive tendencies of communalism.

Every line of thought leads to the conclusion that this united working of the Congress is essential. Is this impossible? Or are the elements composing it incompatible, as has been said? In answering this question we must not think in terms of individuals, but rather of broad policies. The past has shown that this unity of working can be achieved, though there are undoubted difficulties in the way. I have no doubt whatever that there is an overwhelming desire in the rank and file of the Congress to have such cooperation and a united front. The difficulties that arose in the past, though real, were not fundamental. I venture to think that the fault lay on both sides.

United fronts are vague words which have been somewhat abused. Examples of such fronts in Europe have not flourished and have left a bad taste in the mouth. But we must remember that the differences there were far more vital. In China, on the other hand, we see full-blooded cooperation between groups that were bitterly hostile to each other.<sup>19</sup> The national peril compelled them to combine. Are we less sensible of the crises and perils that await us?

19. To forge a united resistance against the Japanese aggression, the People's Political Council, including the Kuomintang, the communists and others, was formed in China in 1938.

The Congress cannot obviously be treated as a sectarian group. It represents the nation and its doors are open to all who believe in its objective and its methods. At the same time it cannot possibly be treated as a kind of federation of groups, a common platform where conflicting opinions and methods are pressed forward for acceptance and attempts are made to arrive at a compromise which enthuses nobody. The Congress has been and is a fighting unit. It must remain so if it is to fulfil its historic purpose. Platforms cannot fight, howsoever joint they might be, nor can debating societies carry on effective struggles.

There has been a tendency in the Congress leadership in the past to become sectarian, narrow-minded, and exclusive. That is undesirable and creates barriers between it and large numbers of people in the Congress and the country. There has also been a marked tendency among these other groups to play the role of an aggressive opposition, to adopt methods not in line with Congress policy, to encourage indiscipline and irresponsibility, to weaken the homogeneity of the Congress, even while they talked of unity and united fronts. That way lies peril and disaster.

A time may perhaps come when the real conscious leftists are strong enough to take charge of the Congress and run it according to their policy. Today they are not in a position to do so. They have neither the national backing nor the discipline for the job. There are numerous groups amongst them, each pulling its own way, with little love for each other, and united only for the moment by a common opposition, a link that will break soon enough. The left today can destroy; it cannot build. They still live in a world of agitation, not fully realising that the Congress and the national movement have grown in stature and speak with authority and responsibility now.

Those among the leftists who are socialists must look at our movement in historic perspective and realise what the present stage of development requires. To overreach the mark now might mean reaction tomorrow. If they are conscious of their historic role, they must prepare themselves for it and gain the confidence of the Congress and the country. Above all, they have to strive their utmost to check indiscipline and the forces of chaos, for out of these neither independence nor socialism will emerge.

Any executive must be homogeneous, in the broad sense of the word, or else it will be ineffective. The executive of a fighting organisation, like the Congress, must inevitably be homogeneous in this sense. But I see no reason why this homogeneity should be interpreted in a narrow sectarian sense. At the same time, every member of the executive must be loyal to it and must not sit there just as a representative of another group which commands his primary loyalty. In the past we had mem-



bers of the Congress Socialist Party in the Working Committee. They continued to remain members of the executive of the Congress Socialist Party and often they spoke in different voices. This seems to me to be undesirable, and a member of the Working Committee should not continue to belong to the executive of a party or group which may have occasion to criticise it. This does not mean a break with the other party but the observance of a rule which will help us to function together, and which will give greater dignity to the Working Committee and its members.

Such were my thoughts when I returned from Europe last November and reviewed the situation. I saw a crisis developing in the states and Gandhiji taking the lead, federation and other issues hung in the air, our provincial governments seemed to be exhausting the possibilities open to them, and the future seemed dynamic. The international situation seemed as bad as it could well be. I thought in terms of approaching crisis in India.

I felt that every effort should be made for the two main groups of the Congress to cooperate together (and these groups, as I have said above, were not leftists or rightists). This cooperation should be based, broadly speaking, on the existing programme and methods of the Congress, and especially on an adherence to the policy of nonviolence. The present leadership should not be markedly disturbed, but fresh blood should be brought in representing the so-called modernist viewpoint. This was not meant to disturb the homogeneity of the Working Committee, but to spread out the responsibility of shouldering the burden of work and guiding the movement. Gandhiji's leadership and guidance were essential, and I believed that he would willingly give it on these conditions. Above all, we should all continue to put an end to the indiscipline and disruptive tendencies in the Congress. This was the essential preliminary to preparation for the struggle that was to come.

### VIII

Soon after my return from Europe in November I was asked about the Congress presidentship. Who was going to be President next year? Would I agree to accept office again? I had not given a moment's thought to the matter and was not particularly interested. But I was quite clear in my own mind that there was no question of my re-election. What occupied my mind was not the personality of the President-to-be, but the policy that the Congress should follow, both nationally and internationally. I did not know then that Subhas Babu was likely to stand again.

Some time later I had occasion to discuss this matter with Gandhiji. I gave it as my decided opinion that Maulana Abul Kalam Azad would be the right choice for the presidentship. He seemed to me just to fit in from every point of view. He could carry on the old tradition of the Congress and yet not in any narrow or sectarian way. He had breadth of vision, a deep understanding of events, and round him every section of the Congress would gather and offer cooperation. He represented to me the ideal emblem of united working which I sought, especially at this critical juncture.

I learnt that Subhas Babu was thinking in terms of re-election. I did not like this idea for a variety of reasons. I disliked it for the same reason as I disliked my own election. I felt that both he and I could serve our cause much better without the burden of the presidentship. During the past year his presidentship had made little difference to the policy of the Congress, and he had functioned more or less as a chairman. He had taken hardly any interest in the A.I.C.C. office and the organisational side of the Congress, and this had led to a certain deterioration. The rapid growth of the organisation required quick and efficient handling, and the A.I.C.C. office was unable to cope with this owing to the fact that the President was largely occupied with local and provincial affairs in Calcutta.

I felt instinctively that an election contest with Subhas Babu as a candidate would probably lead to various difficulties and to the creation of an atmosphere prejudicial to that united working which I deemed essential. The question of left or right did not arise. Indeed, so far as Gandhiji was concerned, he expressed his wish repeatedly in my presence that he would like a socialist as President. Apart from my own name, he mentioned Acharya Narendra Deva's name. But, for the reasons I have indicated above, I did not like the idea of a socialist being President at this stage. I wanted the burden to be shouldered by those who were primarily responsible for the policy to be followed, and I had no desire to change that policy radically then for fear of producing serious complications in our organization. I insisted, therefore, on Maulana's name. There was, so far as I know, no desire on anyone's part to keep out a leftist as such or to insist on a rightist President.

I had a talk with Subhas Babu on the occasion of the Working Committee meeting and told him how I thought about this matter. I presumed that he appreciated my line of reasoning.

Maulana Azad did not readily agree to our proposal. Extraordinarily sensitive and retiring as he is, it is no easy matter to push him forward in this age of conflict. Still, I thought he would ultimately agree, and indeed when I went to Almora I had the definite news that he had



agreed. But soon after, probably because of the possibility of a contest, he decided to withdraw.

It was only on my way down from Almora, on the very eve of the presidential election, that I read the various statements that had been issued. I was pained to read them and fervently wished that everybody might have suppressed the urge to issue statements to the press and take the world into confidence. There seems to be a particular passion in India for all of us (I am an old and inveterate sinner in this respect) to rush with a statement to the press, and our friends of the press encourage us in this failing.

The charges that Subhas Babu had made in his statements<sup>20</sup> regarding a conspiracy to accept federation, and even plans for the formation of ministries, astonished me, for I had not heard anything about all this. If even a rumour to this effect had reached us, it was up to us to thrash it out in the Working Committee. So far as I know, there was never any difference of opinion in regard to federation in the Working Committee. Indeed, there was hardly any marked difference over any other matter, except to some extent about the formation of coalition ministries, on which Subhas Babu held strong views, which I was unable wholly to share. But this was hardly a matter of principle.

I felt, therefore, that very unfair charges had been made on colleagues, and although no names were mentioned, the public would inevitably imagine that some members of the Working Committee were involved. This was a new and serious development in the upper circles of our political life, and it meant the creation of difficulties which it would not be easy to overcome. A small group could hardly function together in a responsible position if there was utter lack of confidence and intrigue was suspected. If this happened at the top, what of the lower ranks of

20. For instance, in a statement on 27 January 1939, Subhas Bose had said: "Though the Congress resolution on Federation is one of uncompromising hostility, the fact remains that some influential Congress leaders have been advocating conditional acceptance of the Federal Scheme in private and public. Until now there has not been the slightest desire on the part of the Rightist leaders to condemn such activities. . . . Can anybody challenge the fact that the belief is widely held that during the coming year, a compromise will be effected between the British Government and the Right-wing of the Congress? This impression may be entirely erroneous, but it is there all the same and nobody can deny its existence. Not only that. It is also generally believed that the prospective list of Ministers for the Federal Cabinet has been already drawn up. In the circumstances it is natural that the Left or Radical bloc in the Congress should feel so strongly on the question of the Federal scheme and desire to have an Anti-Federationist in the Presidential Chair."

the Congress, and how was the growing indiscipline which was weakening our movement to be dealt with?

Later, after the President's re-election, he passed certain direct orders in provincial and local matters, sometimes over the head of the provincial Congress committee concerned. Some of these orders seemed to me to be wrong, but what filled me with apprehension was the manner in which all this was done. It seemed to me that our organisation would suffer grievously if this method was followed. Then came the Working Committee meeting which could not be held.

The President's re-election was a tribute to his personality and popularity. It was the delegates' way of showing that they wanted a stiffening up of our policy. It was also an expression of disapproval of what was considered authoritarianism at the top. It was not a defeat for Gandhiji, as he called it, but indirectly it might be considered a criticism of the Working Committee which had functioned under his guidance. The curious part of it is that the President himself had been responsible for what the Working Committee had done.

Under ordinary circumstances it would have been right and proper for those members of the Working Committee who had been dubbed rightists, and so condemned, to retire and be replaced by others. The fact that personal charges had been made against them of a serious nature made their position still more untenable.

What is to be done now? It would be somewhat presumptuous and a little premature for me to suggest what steps should be taken to resolve our internal crisis when unusual events and strange developments are taking place from day to day. The Congress President, on whom the burden primarily rests, is most unfortunately lying ill. Gandhiji has today started a fast the consequences of which no one can tell.

But within a few days we meet at Tripuri and each one of us must shoulder his or her part of the burden and responsibility. We dare not shirk them. Let us hope that all of us will do so with forbearance and dignity, keeping ever in mind the cause for which we have laboured and the high purposes which have animated us. We shall take our part, great or small, in the decisions that will be made and abide by them in all loyalty. For the organisation is greater than the individuals of whom it consists, and the principles we stand for are more important than personalities. We must avoid all personal bickering and private animosity, and view our problems from the high level which befits the Congress and the chosen representatives of the Indian people.

It would be easy and desirable for me, as for others, to make suggestions about matters of policy and programme. But for the moment other issues take precedence, and these affect the very structure and life



of our great organisation. There are no vital differences about policy or programme today, but even if there were such differences, our first concern must be to maintain the Congress as the representative organ of the Indian people and the effective fighting organisation for India's freedom. If it ceases to be so, what do our resolutions matter and where does our brave talk lead us?

Many people talk about the weakness and vulnerability of British imperialism today and imagine that if we shout loudly enough or threaten persistently, the walls of that citadel will fall down. British imperialism is weak today and the empire of Britain seems to be fading away before our eyes. The forces of evil and reaction dominate the world today and are triumphantly aggressive, and British imperialism lines up with them. But it is by no means so weak or vulnerable as our wishes lead us to think, and, outside scripture, shouting has not been known to bring down the walls of citadels or cities. We dare not under-rate the strength of the adversary. If we win it will be by our own strength, not the weakness of our opponent, for however weak he might be, he will know how to profit by our lack of strength.

It is a patent fact today that the British Government cannot hinder our progress to independence if we can hold together and act in a disciplined and united manner. It is only our own weaknesses and lack of unity and discipline that give it the chance to hold us down and frustrate us. We are strong enough today, potentially; how can we convert that potentiality into actuality?

Long years of struggle and training have hardened us and disciplined our minds and bodies. Instead of talk we spoke the language of action, and even our mildest whispering had weight because it had the promise of action behind it. Success has come to us in some measure, and that very success has made people forget that training and discipline which had laid the foundation for it. It is strange how short our memories are, how soon we forget.

A generation has gone by since the Congress took to this new path of disciplined and peaceful struggle. Many of our dearly loved captains and comrades are no more, and we, who linger on still, feel lonely as our old companions in the struggle drop out. New people come and fill the ranks and grow rightly impatient at the slowness of change. They are eagerly welcomed with their fresh enthusiasm and desire to achieve. They represent today more than we do, and tomorrow is theirs. But these newcomers have no memory of that training and discipline of the long years of trouble. Will they profit by the experience of the passing generation, or will they stumble along and themselves learn in that bitter school? The world is heavy with sorrow and tragedy

stalks everywhere. Abyssinia, Spain, China, Palestine—can we forget them? Can we forget the mad folly of our communal troubles? There is no easy walk-over to freedom anywhere, and many of us will have to pass through the valley of the shadow again and again before we reach the mountain-tops of our desire.

Dangers and difficulties have not deterred us in the past; they will not frighten us now. But we must be prepared for them like men who mean business and who do not waste their energy in vain talk and idle action. The way of preparation lies in our rooting out all impurity and indiscipline from our organisation and making it the bright and shining instrument that will cleave its way to India's freedom.

## 6. To Subhas Chandra Bose<sup>1</sup>

Lucknow  
March 1, 1939

My dear Subhas,

I received your second telegram yesterday in Lucknow.<sup>2</sup> I did not send a telegraphic reply as I do not want to complicate the situation further by formally resigning. Under the existing circumstances the Committee cannot function as it cannot raise even a quorum. Apart from this, under the circumstances I feel I cannot be of much help to you.

Yours affectionately,  
Jawaharlal

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. In his telegram of 28 February 1939, Subhas Bose inquired from Jawaharlal whether he had actually resigned from the Working Committee as his resignation had not been received although his press statements indicated so.



## 7. The Resolution on the National Demand<sup>1</sup>

The Congress has, for more than half a century, striven for the advancement of the people of India and has represented the urge of the Indian people towards freedom and self-expression. During the past twenty years it has engaged itself on behalf of the masses of the country in a struggle against British imperialism and, through the suffering, discipline and sacrifice of the people, it has carried the nation a long way to independence which is its objective.

With the growing strength of the people it has adapted itself to the changing and developing situation; and, while pursuing various programmes, has ever worked for the independence of India and the establishment of a democratic state in the country. Rejecting the Government of India Act and with a full determination to end it, it decided to take advantage of the measure of provincial autonomy, restricted and circumscribed as it was, in order to strengthen the national movement, and to give such relief to the masses as was possible under the circumstances. To the federal part of the Act the Congress declared its uncompromising opposition and its determination to resist its imposition.

The Congress declares afresh its solemn resolve to achieve independence through a constituent assembly elected by the people and without any interference by a foreign authority. No other constitution or attempted solutions of the problem can be accepted by the Indian people. The Congress is of the opinion that, in view of the changed conditions in India as reflected by the increasing popularity and strength of the national movement, the remarkable growth of consciousness among the masses, the new awakening among the people of the Indian states, as well as the rapid development of the world situation, the time has come for full application of the principle of self-determination to India, so that the people of India might establish an independent democratic state by means of a constituent assembly. Not only the inherent right and the dignity of the people demand this full freedom, but also the economic and other problems which press insistently on the masses which cannot find a solution; nor can India get rid of her poverty and keep pace with

1. Moved by Jawaharlal at the subjects committee meeting at the Tripuri Congress, 11 March 1939. *The Hindu*, 12 March 1939.

modern progress unless the people have full opportunities of self-development and growth, which independence alone can give. Provincial autonomy affords no such scope for development, and its capacity for good is being rapidly exhausted; the proposed federation strangles India still further, and will not be accepted. The Congress, therefore, is firmly of opinion that the whole of the Government of India Act must give place to a constitution made for a free India and by the people themselves.

An independent and democratic India will try to resolve our great problems rapidly and effectively, and will line herself up with the progressive peoples of the world, and thus aid the cause of democracy and freedom.

With a view to a speedy realisation of the Congress objectives and in order to face effectively the national and international crises that loom ahead, this Congress calls upon all parts of the Congress organisation, as well as the Congress provincial governments and the people generally, to prepare themselves to this end and to promote unity and in particular to strengthen, purify and discipline the organisation, removing the weaknesses and corrupting influences so as to make it an effective organ of the people's will.

## 8. On Criticism of the Resolution<sup>1</sup>

I have incorporated certain suggestions made in the amendments of Sardar Mangal Singh and Mr. Meherally,<sup>2</sup> but I am unable to accept

1. Speech at the subjects committee meeting, 11 March 1939. From *The Hindu*, 12 March 1939.
2. Mangal Singh in his amendment suggested that the constituent assembly must be elected on the basis of adult franchise and that the form of government to be established by means of a constituent assembly must be an independent democratic state.

Yusuf Meherally's amendment sought close contact with the kisans and parliamentary activities for alleviating kisans' conditions, social legislation, civil liberties for coordinating and developing the struggles in the states as an integral part of the national movement and under the Congress guidance, and the organisation of a trained and disciplined volunteer corps.



others, primarily because they are not consistent with the basic principle underlying my resolution. I am fundamentally opposed to the ultimatum tactics.<sup>3</sup> In the first place, it is not proper to expose our cards. Secondly, we might have to begin the struggle earlier than six months. Lastly, I am opposed to the ministers resigning as is suggested in the amendments. In my opinion, the ministers ought to fight the government from within.

The Congress, in recent years, has gained strength. But it is the strength of the inner organisation that counts in winning the country's struggle for freedom. The time for empty threats has passed. The days of British imperialism in India are numbered, and yet today British imperialism is not so weak as to be frightened by mere wordy ultimatums and empty threats as has been suggested in the amendments.

The demand for the resignation of ministers with a view to creating deadlocks is entirely wrong tactics as it would give the impression to the public that all that is required in the coming struggle is the resignation of the ministers and a boycott of British goods. I assure you that the coming struggle is going to be a grimmer one in which thousands may have to sacrifice their lives. We should, therefore, prepare the masses from now onwards and this preparation must be made on proper lines and not on false grounds.

It is wrong to say that the Congress government in Bombay had ever made any provision for federal election. It was the interim government which had prepared the budget, which, within about fifteen days of their coming into office, the Congress government had to present. The provision was thrown out by the Bombay Assembly.

3. For instance, Lakshmi Kant Misra had suggested a six months' ultimatum and this was rejected by the subjects committee.

Subhas Bose, in his presidential address at the Tripuri Congress on 10 March 1939, had also said: "... The time has come to raise the issue of Swaraj and submit our national demands to the British Government in the form of an ultimatum."

9. To V.K. Krishna Menon<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
March 16, 1939

My dear Krishna,

The cables about Tripuri must have confused you sufficiently. It is not an easy matter to explain the various developments briefly and I cannot say that I am particularly happy at events. I had a bad time there because I did not fit in with any so-called group. Behind the words, right and left, there were many other factors at play, the most notable being the emergence into prominence of certain adventurist individuals who wanted to exploit the left to their own advantage. Nothing could have been worse for the left than to be closely associated with these individuals and groups and their peculiar tactics.

On the one hand, the presidential election, quite apart from the undesirable features, represented a healthy reaction against certain tendencies in the Congress; on the other hand, the voting in the Congress itself represented, among other things, a reaction against adventurism. Many people in the left realised that they were drifting into an unholy alliance with people who had no policy or programme, or any position in the country. Sarat Bose's speech<sup>2</sup> opposing the main resolution of the Congress on the national demand was an astounding performance.

Leftist circles, after a feeling of triumph due to the presidential election, feel somewhat disheartened by the course events took. The reaction is natural. I think, however, that the left has gained something solid and will profit by this experience. The Congress Socialist Party may be shaken up within its own ranks to some extent but it has gained in prestige in the country, because of its dissociation from the adventurist elements. The Communist Party people tried to follow the same path but not very successfully and changed their attitude three times in the course of the two days, largely owing to pressure from Bengal and some other people.

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. Sarat Bose stated on 11 March 1939: "This resolution contains nothing but words, ineffective words, which do not lay down any plan of action, words which do not give our people any lead....Do you want to postpone the struggle till all the people are united? If that is what the resolution means, it will be more honest to say, 'Let us abandon our fight'. Let us not deceive our people....If you do not adopt a firm line of action we shall be betraying the cause of the country."



The situation is not by any means clear and the part I am likely to play in future is less clear in my own mind.

Meanwhile, Europe rushes ahead in a fantastic fashion and Czechoslovakia is no more. The policy of appeasement goes on to its predestined end. How events will shape themselves during the next few weeks, I do not know. But the sense of crisis and tension increases. Inevitably, I tend to view Indian problems with this European background. But few others do so.

I do not know what will happen to Nambiar now and whether he will stay on at Prague or not. I think it will be a good thing if he came to India for a while. I am enclosing a cheque for £15 for him. Will you please credit it to his account? This has nothing to do with the *National Herald*.

The Egyptian delegation is having a good reception wherever they go and they have been tremendously impressed by what they have seen so far as they go on saying: "All this is a thousand times more than we had expected." What has impressed them most has been the organisational side of the Congress, for the Wafd Party has hardly any organisation.

On our return from Tripuri, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad managed to slip on the station platform and hurt himself badly. He has got a fracture in the left knee-joint. Most of my time during the last three days has been spent in looking after him.

I am going to Delhi for two days to see Gandhiji.

I am not sure yet about Indira's programme. But probably she will go to England next month. She feels like going and I have left it to her. My sister Krishna and Hutheesing also intend going to England next month. Perhaps they will go together.

Yours affectionately,  
Jawaharlal

**10. To Mahatma Gandhi<sup>1</sup>**

Allahabad  
March 22, 1939

My dear Bapu,

Thank you for your letter. I do not know the names of the Congressmen who are supposed to have approached a government official in Delhi.<sup>2</sup> The names have not been mentioned to me.

I received today the following telegram from Subhas from Jharia:

Received your telegram<sup>3</sup> only yesterday. Does it represent your personal views or views of others also and if so of whom?

To this I sent the following reply:

Your telegram. My previous message sent my own behalf but after conversation with Gandhiji who keenly feels Congress work suffering owing lack direction office arrangements. Also national, international crises demand ceaseless vigilance. Later informed him of my message.

Maulana is much the same. His pain is generally less and the swelling has also partly subsided. He is waiting for your visit here and after that intends to go to Calcutta.

Yours affectionately,  
Jawahar

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. Bhulabhai Desai and some local Congressmen of Delhi had met the home secretary in February 1939 in connection with the state prisoners in Delhi jail.

3. Not available.



## 11. To Mahatma Gandhi<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
March 24, 1939

My dear Bapu,

I enclose copy of a letter I am sending to Subhas.<sup>2</sup> As you will notice from it I had another telephone message, this time from Sunil Bose<sup>3</sup> from Calcutta, on the same lines as the Jharia one. On learning that you had gone back to Delhi he apparently intended sending you a telegram to the same effect.

Yours affectionately,  
Jawahar

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. See the succeeding item. The letter was, in fact, written to Sarat Bose and its copy sent to Subhas Bose.
3. (1894-1953); elder brother of Subhas Bose and a well-known cardiologist.

## 12. To Sarat Chandra Bose<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
March 24, 1939

My dear Sarat,

Gandhiji arrived here this morning to see Maulana Azad and he showed me your letter to him dated the 21st March.<sup>2</sup> I have read this with sorrow and surprise. There are, as we all know, differences of opinion amongst leading Congressmen on matters of policy and programme and we have often given expression to our respective viewpoints, although we have succeeded in pulling together. Generally speaking,

1. *A Bunch of Old Letters*, (Bombay, 1960), pp. 324-328.
2. He had complained to Mahatma Gandhi about what he called "mean, malicious and vindictive" propaganda carried on against Subhas Bose by "some ex-members of the Working Committee" in Tripuri and cited a number of "instances of unfairness and impropriety in the conduct of the proceedings of the Congress" by Maulana Azad.

Gandhiji's programme has been followed by the Congress and his leadership accepted. Personally I do not see any harm in such differences, provided the common link remains and we act in unison. They are signs of vitality in our movement. But your letter hardly refers to any question of policy or programme. It deals with personal issues and brings serious charges against particular individuals. This brings the argument to a lower level and it is obvious that if such opinions are held by any individual or group against another, mutual cooperation in a common task becomes impossible. I do not know how far your letter represents Subhas's views on the subject. In any event it is obvious that the personal questions you have raised, unless cleared up, offer a barrier to any effective cooperation.

Your letter makes the personal issue acute. But the issue was there even before and, as you know, it dominated the scene at Tripuri. When I saw Subhas two or three days after the presidential election, I sensed the importance of this and begged him to clear it up. Very soon after, on February 4th, I wrote to him a long letter in which I asked him to clear up, so far as he was concerned, the political issues involved as there had been far too much vague talk of left and right which threw no light on the situation.<sup>3</sup> Further I referred to the personal aspect. I wrote as follows:

Public affairs involve principles and policies. They also involve an understanding of each other and faith in the *bona fides* of colleagues. If this understanding and faith are lacking, it is very difficult to cooperate with advantage. As I have grown in years I have come to attach more and more importance to this faith and understanding between colleagues. What am I to do with the finest principles if I do not have confidence in the person concerned? The party rivalries in many provinces illustrate this and we find extreme bitterness and often an utter lack of scruples among people who are ordinarily honourable and straight. I cannot stomach this kind of politics and I have kept absolutely aloof from them for these many years. I function individually without any group or any second person to support me, although I am happy enough to possess the confidence of many. I feel that this provincial deterioration is now being transferred or extended to the all-India plane. This is a matter of the most serious concern to me. So we come back to this: behind the political problems, there are psychological problems, and these are always more difficult to handle. The only

3. See pp. 480-485.





WITH SOME CONGRESSMEN IN DELHI, MARCH 1939



WITH MAHATMA GANDHI IN DELHI, MARCH 1939



way to do so is perfect frankness with each other and I hope therefore that all of us will be perfectly frank.

Unfortunately Subhas did not have the time or the inclination to clarify the political issues or the personal ones. When he was going to see Gandhiji at Wardha I begged him again to deal with the personal aspect frankly as the allegations he had made in his statements were a serious matter and could not be left where they were. His subsequent explanation has not improved matters at all.<sup>4</sup> He promised to talk with Gandhiji about this but it subsequently transpired that he did not even mention the subject.

This matter thus came up before the Congress, as I feared it would, and coloured the consideration of other issues. My own attitude in this was peculiar to myself and I could not wholly agree with the views of any of the others on either side. I refrained therefore from taking any part in the discussion either in the subjects committee or in the open Congress. I felt strongly however that the President's allegations in his statements were unfair to his colleagues and should be withdrawn. My intervention in the open Congress was merely to act as the mouthpiece of the acting President and explain in English the procedure that was to be followed. For some reason or other some delegates did not want me to speak at all, although they did not know what I was going to say, and there was the organised obstruction by them which you saw.<sup>5</sup> I felt that it would be improper for me to retire or give in to this obstruction of a few delegates when nearly a hundred thousand delegates and visitors, who observed the most remarkable calm and discipline, wanted to hear me. So I held on for an hour and a half. I must confess that I lost my temper for a few seconds when I told you that this was hooliganism and fascist behaviour. I was telling you about this and not the audience although some of my words might have been carried on the

4. In a statement on 3 March 1939, Subhas Bose stated: "I have carefully scanned all the statements I made prior to the election. Nowhere do I find any allegation against any individual Congress leader whether he be a member of the Working Committee or not. All that I did was to give expression to what the public were thinking and saying in the country....As a matter of fact, when I happened to speak against the Federal Scheme I was twitted and taunted by people who told me to my face that I was living in a fool's paradise and that in due course office acceptance in the provinces would be followed by the acceptance of the Federal Scheme, perhaps with some slight modifications."
5. On 12 March 1939, as soon as Jawaharlal rose to explain the difficulties of taking a poll on M.S. Aney's proposal to defer consideration of the resolution moved by C. B. Pant, a section of delegates staged a noisy demonstration and refused to hear him.

microphone. I am sorry I lost my temper but you will no doubt realise that the strain on me was considerable.

I have explained this at some length as I was personally concerned in the incident. The other matters that you refer to are largely outside my knowledge, but the charges you make are so surprising that I can hardly believe they are true. There was, I believe, extensive canvassing during the Congress and all manner of things might have been said. Having a distaste for this kind of thing I kept far away and did not even visit the delegates' camps except to attend a meeting of the U.P.C.C. right at the beginning. Your charges are however against some leading members of the old Working Committee. I know nothing about these and I am sure you will agree with me that such charges cannot be brought lightly against individuals without specific proof. It was absurd for anyone to say that Subhas's illness was a fake and none of my colleagues even hinted at this to my knowledge. In fact we were all greatly exercised over it.

As for what Bhulabhai Desai is supposed to have said, it is for him to reply. I must presume that you were mistaken as I cannot conceive that he would say such a thing.<sup>6</sup>

It is not for me to say anything about the acting President's rulings or conduct. But I am sure you will agree with me on reconsideration that he occupied a very difficult position and conducted the proceedings with dignity and fairness. He might have stretched a point in allowing you to move your amendment to the resolution on the national demand but, as it happens, you had full scope to place your point of view before the Congress.<sup>7</sup> In the voting you were the one and only person who opposed the resolution. May I say how astonished I was at this for I could not conceive any Congressman who considered himself a leftist opposing it?

During my stay at Tripuri all manner of reports and rumours from the delegates' camps reached me, some of a very unsavoury character. But I refused to give credence to any without proof. One matter, deserving of your enquiry, was the issue of delegates tickets to Bengal delegates. It was stated by responsible persons, and confirmed to some extent by the A.I.C.C. office that a large number of tickets were issued for persons

6. Sarat Bose had alleged in his letter that "sitting on the dais in the subjects committee pandal Bhulabhai Desai went on describing the Rashtrapati and his barrister brother (meaning myself) as scoundrels."

7. Maulana Azad, acting as President, had not admitted an amendment moved by Sarat Bose on the federation and national demand resolution on the ground of lack of notice.



who had not come to Tripuri. Further that large sums had been spent in bringing delegates to the Congress.

I think that it is desirable to have some kind of investigation into the various charges brought by you or others. It is improper that such charges should be made vaguely, and the fact that many people believe in them does not substantiate them. We cannot allow our public life to descend to a level of mutual recrimination.

You refer to the Congress ministers. I am no great admirer of all their activities but I am surprised at your objecting to the part they took at Tripuri. Must they refrain from taking part in the Congress because they are ministers? This is a novel proposition and, I think, a wrong one. So far as I know they acted in their individual capacities, as they were perfectly entitled to do. What do you mean by their 'material influence'? I think this should be cleared up as it has strange implications which are entirely unjustified. I do not understand also why the participation by ministers in Congress activities should mean their dominating the Congress. They are very far from this.

I had hoped that it would be possible, in these days of internal and external crisis, to have a large measure of cooperation among Congressmen and laboured to this end at Tripuri and before. It seems to me obvious that the essential preliminary to any action or leftist programme is that we should function effectively. If we do not do so then all programmes are futile and lead nowhere. And yet it is just this absence of functioning that is creeping upon us slowly but surely. Because of this I wired to Subhas Bose from Delhi suggesting that the Working Committee be formed soon in accordance with the Tripuri resolution. I further suggested that the A.I.C.C. might be held to consider the international situation.

The Tripuri resolution envisaged cooperation between the Congress President and Gandhiji and the policy was more or less to continue without a break. Your letter seems to imply that this is not possible. Whether this is Subhas's view also, I do not know. If it is, then obviously there is an impasse which can only be resolved by the A.I.C.C. and the sooner the A.I.C.C. is held the better.

I feel as strongly as ever that it is essential for us to be clear in our own minds about the policy and programme to be pursued. More especially the so-called left should be clear. It is dangerous for the left to be vague and to allow itself to drift to adventurist positions. I invited Subhas to clarify his position and I would suggest to you to do the same. I find many people who call themselves leftist suggesting methods and policies which are very rightist and moderate. Take the

question of a coalition ministry in Bengal.<sup>8</sup> This may be conceivable under certain circumstances but it is definitely a rightist move now. I do not understand why you should desire a coalition ministry in Bengal, under dubious auspices, and yet object to the Congress ministries elsewhere which function, whatever their failings, under better circumstances.

You refer to obstruction at Tripuri by some of the old members of the Working Committee. I do not know what you mean by this, unless you object to an individual or group putting forward a proposal before the Congress. Apart from this I do not know what obstruction there was.

You have used language in your letter which is exceedingly strong and bitter. I have read this with great regret and I have failed to find any justification for it. What pains me most is the overshadowing of all political issues by the personal equation. If there is to be conflict among Congressmen, I earnestly hope that it will be kept on a higher level and will be confined to matters of policy and principle.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Subhas. Gandhiji has also seen it.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

8. In his presidential address at the Bengal Provincial Political Conference at Jalpaiguri on 4 February 1939, Sarat Bose had advocated the formation of a coalition ministry in Bengal to reduce the Hindu-Muslim tension. Later, in his letter of 4 April 1939, he wrote that once the Congress had decided to accept office which was a "rightist move", there should be no objection to the formation of coalition ministries "provided the Congress programme is also accepted in the latter."

### 13. Rumours in the Press<sup>1</sup>

I have read with great surprise various accounts of Mahatma Gandhi's recent visit to Allahabad and of the conversations that are supposed to

1. Statement to the press, Allahabad, 26 March 1939. *The Leader*, 28 March 1939.



have taken place there.<sup>2</sup> All these accounts are entirely fanciful and are full of suggestions which have no basis in fact. When I went to Delhi a week ago I took a message from Maulana Azad to Gandhiji in which the Maulana stated that he had been looking forward very much to meeting Gandhiji and discussing various matters with him but, to his great regret, his accident had incapacitated him from going to Delhi. Thereupon Gandhiji told me that he would try his best to come to Allahabad to see the Maulana although it was difficult for him to leave Delhi then. He managed to find a day and came to Allahabad for a few hours returning the same evening. As he was leaving for the station I had a telephone message from Jharia to the effect that the doctors had no objection to Gandhiji visiting Subhas Babu. I promised to inform Gandhiji of this but pointed out that he was actually on the way to Delhi then, where he had important engagements the next day. Three hours after Gandhiji's departure I had a similar message from Dr. Sunil Bose from Calcutta. Last evening Maulana Azad went to Calcutta for further treatment. The injury he is suffering from is a serious one and he is likely to be bed-ridden for probably two months or more.

May I request newspapers and their correspondents not to indulge in fanciful surmises which complicate a situation which is none too easy?

2. There were rumours that Mahatma Gandhi, Vallabhbhai Patel, Abul Kalam Azad and Jawaharlal had discussed names for the Working Committee and the decision would be communicated to the Congress President, Subhas Bose.

#### 14. To V. K. Krishna Menon<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
March 31, 1939

My dear Krishna,

...The situation here continues to be exceedingly complex and disturbing. Subhas Bose's attitude is the reverse of helpful and under his direction a virulent propaganda is being carried on all over Bengal. Subhas has declared that the Congress resolution, which referred to the presidential election controversy, is *ultra vires*, although he himself allowed

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L. Extracts.

it to be discussed in the Congress.<sup>2</sup> This means that he will carry on this conflict in various ways. He might even refuse to accept the decision of the A.I.C.C. He has completely alienated the Congress Socialist Party and many other advanced elements.

The communal situation is also very bad. Also there are so many other factors which increase our difficulties. However all this is only a fraction of what you are passing through in Europe.

Yours affectionately,  
Jawaharlal

2. In a statement on 25 March 1939, Subhas Bose had said, "If the frankly unconstitutional and *ultra vires* clause in Pandit Pant's resolution regarding the formation of the Working Committee had not been passed by the Tripuri Congress, I would, in accordance with the Congress constitution, have announced the personnel of the new Working Committee on 13 March 1939."

## 15. To Subhas Chandra Bose<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
3.4.1939

My dear Subhas,

Your long letter of the 28th March has only just reached me and I hasten to reply. First of all I should like to say how glad I am that you have written to me fully and frankly and made it clear to me how you feel about me and about various incidents. Frankness hurts often enough, but it is almost always desirable, especially between those who have to work together. It helps one to see oneself in proper perspective from another's and a more critical viewpoint. Your letter is very helpful in this respect and I am grateful to you for it.

It is not an easy matter to answer a letter which runs into twenty seven typed sheets and is full of references to numerous incidents as well as to various policies and programmes. I am afraid therefore that my reply will not be as full and detailed as it might be. To endeavour to deal with all these matters properly one would have to write a book, or something like it.

Your letter is essentially an indictment of my conduct and an investigation into my failings. It is, as you will well realise, a difficult and

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L. Also published in *A Bunch of Old Letters*, (Bombay, 1960), pp. 350-363.



embarrassing task to have to reply to such an indictment. But so far as the failings are concerned, or many of them at any rate, I have little to say. I plead guilty to them, well realising that I have the misfortune to possess them. May I also say that I entirely appreciate the truth of your remark that ever since you came out of internment in 1937, you treated me with the utmost regard and consideration, in private as well as in public life? I am grateful to you for this. Personally I have always had, and still have, regard and affection for you, though sometimes I did not like at all what you did or how you did it. To some extent, I suppose, we are temperamentally different and our approach to life and its problems is not the same.

I shall now deal with your letter and take up the paragraphs one by one.<sup>2</sup>

I forget what I told you when you saw me in Allahabad on my return from Europe last November. You broke your journey here for a short while on your way to Calcutta from Karachi. I cannot imagine what there was for me to refer to Gandhiji at the time before I could give you a definite answer. Nor do I remember what the question was. But probably what I meant was that my own future course of action would depend on Gandhiji's reactions to various matters. You will remember what I told you before and after Haripura. I was greatly troubled then about my association with the Working Committee as a member and I wanted to leave. This was because I had felt more and more that I was performing no useful function there. Also that Gandhiji was thinking in terms of what he called a 'homogeneous' Committee and I could not see myself forming part of it. The choice before me then became one of withdrawing myself quietly from it and cooperating with it from outside, or of challenging Gandhiji and his group. I felt that it would be injurious in the interests of India and our cause for me or you to create this definite split. It is of course absurd to say that there should be unity at any cost. Unity may be harmful and injurious at times and then it must go. It all depends on the circumstances then prevailing, and I was convinced at the time that the pushing out, or the attempt

2. In his letter of 28 March 1939, Subhas Bose wrote to Jawaharlal: "When you came back from Europe last year, I went to Allahabad to ask you what lead you would give us. Usually, when I approached you in this way, your replies have been vague and non-committal. For instance, last year when you returned from Europe, you put me off by saying that you would consult Gandhiji and then let me know. When we met at Wardha after you had seen Gandhiji, you did not tell me anything definite. Later on, you produced some resolutions before the Working Committee in which there was nothing new and there was no lead to the country."

to push out, of Gandhiji and his group would weaken us greatly at a critical moment. I was not prepared to face that contingency. At the same time I dislike many of the developments that were taking place and disapproved of the general attitude of Gandhiji in regard to certain matters, such as states and ministries.

I went to Europe and when I came back I was faced by the old problem again. It was then that you met me and probably I told you what I had in mind. My own mind was clear but my action would depend on Gandhiji's reactions to the situation. If he still held to the 'homogeneous' Committee idea, then I was out of it. If not, then I would try to cooperate as a member of the Working Committee. I was not prepared to do anything to split the Congress on this issue. I was full of the developing crises in India and outside and felt that we might have to face a big struggle in the course of a few months. That struggle, without Gandhiji's active participation and leadership, was not likely to be an effective one.

My conception of this struggle was not on the basis of federation. I wanted the Congress to treat federation as almost a dead issue and to concentrate on the demand for self-determination and constituent assembly, and further to place this in relation to the world crisis. I felt that too much positive stress on fighting federation helped in keeping this issue alive and prevented us from thinking, and later acting, on the more fundamental plane. When I was in England you issued a statement to the effect that you would fight federation to the last and that if the Congress accepted it, you would still fight it.<sup>3</sup> Now this statement of yours had exactly the contrary effect in England. Everybody said that if the Congress President is thinking in terms of resigning on the issue of federation, Congress must be on the point of accepting it. I felt helpless and could not easily meet this argument.

I framed two resolutions on this basis. There was nothing extraordinary about them except that the stress was different. All our resolutions for the Working Committee, as you know, have to be framed with a view to being agreed to by other members. It is easy enough to draft something, which pleases one better, but which does not meet with the approval of others. My idea in placing these resolutions before the Working Committee was to prepare the ground, as well as the mind of the country, for a more comprehensive and far-reaching resolution at the

3. Subhas Bose stated on 8 July 1938: "So far as I am concerned, should any unthinkable contingency arise of the Federal Scheme being adopted by the majority within the Congress, it would probably be my duty to relieve myself of the trammels of office so that I would be free to work for what I consider to be in the best interests of the country, namely, open, unmitigated and unrelenting opposition to the monstrous Federal Scheme."



next Congress. However, my resolutions were not agreed to and I was told that they should be considered at Congress time.

It was at this meeting of the Working Committee that I proposed a resolution about the Jews. You will remember that just previously there had been a terrible pogrom in Germany against the Jews and the world was full of this. I felt that we must express our opinion in regard to it. You say that you were "astounded when I produced a resolution seeking to make India an asylum for the Jews". I am surprised to learn that you felt so strongly about this as, so far as I remember, you did not express yourself definitely at the time. But is it fair to characterise my resolution as one seeking to establish an asylum for the Jews in India? I have the old draft before me. It says: "The Committee see no objection to the employment in India of such Jewish refugees as are experts and specialists and who can fit in with the new order in India and accept Indian standards". It was not from the point of view of helping Jews that I considered this question, though such help was desirable where possible without detriment to our country, but from the point of view of helping ourselves by getting first-rate men for our science, industry, etc., on very moderate payment. Quite a number of countries sent special commissions to Vienna, after the Nazi occupation, to pick out good men. Turkey has profited greatly from such specialists. It seemed to me an ideal chance to get the right type of technicians and specialists. Their coming here on low salaries would have helped us also to bring down other salaries. They would have come for a period and not to settle down for ever. And only a limited number would have come, and only such as were of definite use to us and accepted our standards and political outlook. However, this resolution also not being agreed to was dropped.

You refer to a speech I delivered in Delhi after the Congress presidential election. I am sorry I have not seen the press report you refer to although someone told me about it later. As a matter of fact, I said nothing at all about you or your election. I was referring to Delhi and Punjab Congress troubles and disputes and said that there was far too much desire for office and canvassing, etc., for this.<sup>4</sup> I deprecated

4. In his letter Subhas Bose said: "At a speech in Delhi you were reported to have said that you disliked that canvassing should have been done by or for me. I do not know what exactly was in your mind, but you were blissfully oblivious of the fact that my election appeal was made after Dr. Pattabhi's appeared in the press.... The other side had a regular organisation; moreover, they had all the big guns and yourself against me, as well as the full weight of Mahatma Gandhi's name and prestige—and the majority of the provincial Congress committees were also in their hands. As against them, what did I have—a solitary individual?..."

this. Probably the pressman had your election in his mind and so distorted what I said. I inquired from others who were present at the meeting and they corroborated my own impression of what I had said.

You are perfectly right in saying that there was a great deal of canvassing for Dr. Pattabhi as there was for you. I see no objection to canvassing for an election. I do not exactly know what you mean by saying that the machinery of the Congress ministries was used to secure votes for Pattabhi. I do not know what machinery there is for this purpose and certainly I did not see it functioning in the U.P., except, in one individual case, in your favour. I have no idea how our ministers voted but I am inclined to think that not more than half voted for Dr. Pattabhi, and for aught I know there might have been even less. One minister refused to vote; one actively and publicly canvassed for you, and it was the general opinion that he secured a large number of votes for you.

You are perfectly right in objecting to my running you down in a public meeting. That would have been most improper. But, as a matter of fact, I did no such thing at Delhi or elsewhere.

I come to my statement which I issued when the twelve members of the Working Committee resigned.<sup>5</sup> There were two days of long argument when I ventured to put forward a far less extreme position than the one taken up by some other members of the Working Committee. Previously to that meeting, when I had heard that there was a possibility of resignation, I had tried to prevent this. Again I tried to do so. But various factors made the position far more difficult than it had been. You know that I had felt strongly about the reflections made on some Working Committee members in your presidential statements. I had mentioned this to you repeatedly. When you were going to see Gandhiji, I had specially tried to impress upon you that this was the first matter to be cleared up before political questions were discussed. Jaya Prakash had agreed with me. There can be no political discussion when there is a wall of suspicion and distrust between two persons. What you had said in your statements was totally unjustified. It is obviously not good enough for a person in the inside and responsible position of the Congress President to repeat press rumours or bazaar statements. He is supposed to be in the know and even a hint from him brings conviction to others. You did not mention any names, it is true, but every reader of your statements necessarily came to the conclusion that it referred to some members of the Working Committee.

5. See pp. 485-487.



No greater insult could be offered to a person than to suggest that he has secretly betrayed the cause he publicly stands for and even arranged a mutual distribution of ministries in the federation. It was a fantastic statement and it hurt to the quick.

Such a statement was an effective barrier to any further cooperation between you and Gandhiji, for the others in a sense represented Gandhiji. I was keen that there should be cooperation between you two as the alternative seemed to me highly injurious. I pressed you therefore to clear this barrier and to have a frank talk with Gandhiji. I thought you agreed to do so. I was astonished to find later from Jaya Prakash and Gandhiji that you did not even mention the subject. I must confess that this upset me greatly and it made me realise how difficult it was to work together with you.

Gandhiji further told us that the impression he had gathered from your visit to him was that you were not keen on having his cooperation, although you had asked him rather casually for it. It seemed that you were thinking in terms of forming a Working Committee of various persons whom you had already considered (and perhaps promised) for this purpose. You were of course perfectly entitled to do so but all this indicated that you were thinking in terms other than those of co-operation with Gandhiji and his group.

The action you had taken in regard to the Punjab election, the Delhi election, and in Nellore in Andhra alarmed me—not the action so much as the manner of taking it.<sup>6</sup> You took direct action without reference to the A.I.C.C. office or, in the Andhra case, to the P.C.C. In the Punjab, you sent a telegram stopping an inquiry on behalf of the A.I.C.C. office. In Delhi, you took action without previous reference to the P.C.C. Personally I think that your Delhi decision was incorrect but that is not important. I felt that you were allowing yourself to be influenced directly by individuals and groups and overriding the impersonal and routine method of approach which an office should adopt. This method seemed to me full of dangers.

You say that “in the habit of interfering from the top, no Congress President can beat” me. I realise that I am an interfering sort of a person, but so far as the work of the A.I.C.C. is concerned, I do not recollect having interfered with the work of the office of the A.I.C.C. though I sought to influence it frequently. My deliberate policy was

6. This refers to the elections of office-bearers of the provincial Congress committees.

(as circulars to this effect were issued) not to interfere, and in provincial matters even for the A.I.C.C. office not to interfere, unless there was no other way out.

While these various developments were troubling me, your telegrams to Gandhiji and Vallabhbhai came, and these were interpreted to mean that you did not want us to meet at all in the Working Committee or even to transact routine business.<sup>7</sup> As you say you did not mean any such prohibition, but the telegrams were certainly open to this interpretation. It was possible that a further inquiry might have been addressed to you to find out what you meant. But this seemed undesirable as it meant pressing you to allow us to do something which perhaps you did not want done just then.

All this seemed to make clear that you intended to pursue a path with companions of your own choice, and that the old members of the Working Committee were an encumbrance and not particularly wanted. It became quite essential for them to resign; not to do so would have been unfair to you, to the country and to themselves, and contrary to democratic procedure. I do not understand how they could have stayed on or how their resignation created a deadlock. Not to have resigned would have created an impasse as this would have prevented you from taking such action as you thought proper.

I adopted, as you have rightly pointed out, a rather foolish attitude. I did not actually resign and yet I acted as if I had done so.<sup>8</sup> The reason for this was that I entirely disagreed with the whole approach of my colleagues. I felt strongly that under the circumstances I could not offer you my cooperation, but I felt equally strongly that I

7. Bose informed Patel on 21 February 1939 that owing to his illness the meeting of the Congress Working Committee "must be postponed till the Congress" and requested him to "consult colleagues and wire opinion."

8. Subhas Bose stated: "Twelve members resigned. They wrote a straightforward letter—a decent letter in which they made their position unequivocally clear. Considering my illness, they did not say one unkind word about me, though they could have criticised me adversely if they had wanted to. But your statement—how shall I describe it? I shall refrain from using strong language and simply say it was unworthy of you. (I am told that you wanted your statement to be substantially embodied in the general letter of resignation, but that this was not agreed to.) Then your statement gave one the impression that you had resigned, as the other twelve members had done—but up till now, to the general public, your position remains a mystery. When a crisis comes, you often do not succeed in making up your mind one way or the other—with the result that to the public you appear as if you are riding two horses."



was in a sense breaking with the others. In fact, the latter feeling was the stronger as it meant the end of a chapter which had been a long one. If you will read the first of the series of articles I wrote in the *National Herald*, you will perhaps get some inkling as to how my mind was functioning.<sup>9</sup>

There was no question of my statement<sup>10</sup> of February 22nd being embodied in the general letter of resignation. My statement was obviously a personal one and it could not be treated otherwise. I had been pressed hard to join the others in their resignation. I had refused. I did not even see their letter of resignation till after it had been sent to you.

May I explain a little further what has troubled my mind very greatly during the past two months or so? I was against your standing for election for two major reasons: it meant under the circumstances a break with Gandhiji and I did not want this to take place. (Why this should have necessarily happened I need not go into. I felt that it would happen.) It would mean also, I thought, a setback for the real left. The left was not strong enough to shoulder the burden by itself and when a real contest came in the Congress, it would lose and then there would be a reaction against it. I thought it probable that you would win the election as against Pattabhi, but I doubted very much whether you could carry the Congress with you in a clear contest with what is called Gandhism. Even if by any chance you secured a majority in the Congress, this would not represent a strong enough backing in the country without Gandhiji and effective work, and even more so preparation for a struggle, would be very difficult. There were so many disruptive tendencies already existing in the country and instead of controlling them, we would add to them. All this meant weakening our national movement just when strength was necessary.

These were my two main reasons for my opposition to your re-election. What some Bombay friends told you was not wholly correct. What I said was that if you stood for certain definite leftist principles and policies, then there might be some point in your seeking re-election, as the election would then be an education in ideas and policies. But an election on a more or less personal basis did not even have this merit. In any event, I did not think your standing for election desirable for the reasons I have given above.

9. See pp. 488-490.

10. See pp. 485-487.

My statements of January 26th<sup>11</sup> and February 22nd are of course different but I do not think they represent any change in outlook.<sup>12</sup> The first statement was issued before your election and I wanted to avoid, as far as I could, taking sides. I had been asked to appeal for Dr. Pattabhi. I had not agreed to this. My statement was therefore deliberately toned down. Later, certain additional facts came to my notice. I saw your election statements and the various other things happened to which I have referred above. I saw also that you were closely associated with a number of odd individuals who were apparently influencing you considerably. These individuals were, some of them, personally desirable, but they did not represent to my mind any leftist opinion, or any organised opinion. That is why I call them adventurist in the technical political sense. A spirit of adventure is of course a very desirable thing in an individual or a nation. But in a political contest the word has a certain meaning, not by any means dishonourable to the person concerned. I did not at all like this adventurist tendency and considered it harmful to our cause. The association of vague leftist slogans with no clear leftist ideology or principles has in recent years been much in evidence in Europe. It has led to fascist development and a straying away of large sections of the public. The possibility of such a thing happening in India possessed my mind and disturbed me. The fact that in international affairs you held different views from mine and did not wholly approve our condemnation of Nazi Germany or fascist Italy added to my discomfort, and looking at the picture as a whole, I did not at all fancy the direction in which apparently you wanted us to go.

I was not quite sure of this direction or your views, although the general indications disturbed me. Hence I wrote to you some time early in

11. See pp. 477-479.

12. Charging Jawaharlal with inconsistency, Subhas Bose had written: "In your Almora statement you concluded by saying that we should forget persons and remember only principles and our cause. It never struck you that you want us to forget persons, only when certain persons are concerned. When it is a case of Subhas Bose standing for re-election, you run down personalities and lionise principles, etc. When it is a case of Maulana Azad standing for re-election, you do not hesitate to write a long panegyric. When it is a case of Subhas Bose vs. Sardar Patel and others, then Subhas Bose must first of all clear up the personal issue. When Sarat Bose complains of certain things at Tripuri (viz., of the attitude and conduct of those who call themselves orthodox followers of Mahatma Gandhi) he is, according to you, coming down to personal questions, when he should be confining himself to principles and programmes. I confess that my poor brain is unable to follow your consistency."



February and asked you to write a note to clear these matters up.<sup>13</sup> You did not have time to do so and then you fell ill. My difficulties remained and continued to trouble my mind. It is a reflection of all this that you see in my statement of February 22nd and, soon after, in my articles in the *National Herald*. The possibility of a Working Committee being formed with odd elements in it, holding no consistent viewpoint together but linked merely by a common opposition, was not an agreeable one. I did not see how I could join it. I had had difficulty enough with the old Working Committee, although, in spite of differences, we understood each other and had managed to pull on together for years. I had no desire to continue in that position; much less could I welcome association in a small executive, between some of the members of which and me there was not even that link of common understanding.

One personal aspect I should like to mention also quite frankly. I felt all along that you were far too keen on re-election. Politically there was nothing wrong in it and you were perfectly entitled to desire re-election and to work for it. But it did distress me for I felt that you had a big enough position to be above this kind of thing. I felt also that you could influence policies and groups far more if you had acted otherwise.

You remind me of what Vallabhbhai said about you and point out that I have not criticised him for it.<sup>14</sup> So far as the various statements that were issued at election time are concerned, I did not like them at all. I wish that none had been issued. But, speaking from memory, I do not remember anything special in them which required my intervention. Vallabhbhai's phrase that your election would be harmful to the country's cause was used in a private telegram sent to Sarat. I think it does make a difference whether one says something in a public statement or a private letter or telegram. The fact that this message was sent to your brother is also significant. It is a strong remark to make but not one which has any dishonourable intent. If Vallabhbhai is convinced that India's good requires Gandhiji's leadership and that your re-election might deprive India of this leadership, then he can well think

13. See pp. 480-485.

14. Bose had written: "I have already asked you if you consider it fair on the part of Sardar Patel to declare that my re-election would be harmful to the country's cause. You never said a word that he should withdraw such a remark—thereby indirectly supporting his allegation. Now I would like to ask you what you think of Mahatmaji's remark to the effect that, after all, I am not an enemy of the country. Do you think that such a remark was justified? If so then did you put in a word on my behalf to Mahatmaji?"

and say so. Just as however much we might respect Gandhiji, we may well come to the conclusion that his leadership is dangerous and harmful to the country.

I wrote to you that your re-election has done some harm and some good. I still hold to that opinion though the harm might outweigh the good, in the sense that it leads to disruption in our ranks. The good was that it shook up the complacency of some of our old leaders. I have no doubt in my mind that the vote in your favour was largely a vote against this complacency and to some extent against the methods that had been followed. I have pointed this out repeatedly and strongly to Gandhiji and others and begged of them to pay heed to it. There was substance in the protest which took shape in the voting at the presidential election.

You remind me that while on the one hand I object to your interfering from the top, I had written to you on February 4th that you were far too non-assertive and passive as President. That is true. The interference to which I referred came just before and mostly after your re-election. It did not refer to the previous period. When I referred to your non-assertiveness I was thinking of your attitude in the Working Committee during the past year. I had hoped that you would give a stronger lead there, though I did not want a split. Nor did I want you to interfere as President in provincial matters.

You refer to certain members of the Working Committee meeting in your absence and behind your back and deciding to set up Dr. Pattabhi for the presidentship. I think some misapprehension has been caused by Vallabhbhai's statement about this and I am glad you have given me a chance to clear this up. So far as I know there was no such meeting. What happened at Bardoli was that Maulana Azad was pressed by Gandhiji and me, as well as others, to agree to stand. He was reluctant to do so. The day I was leaving Bardoli (the day after you left) I went to say good-bye to Gandhiji and others. Some of us were standing in the verandah of Gandhiji's cottage. I forget who was there apart from Maulana and Vallabhbhai. Maulana again said that he hesitated to shoulder the responsibility. Thereupon Vallabhbhai said that in the event of Maulana finally refusing, Dr. Pattabhi should be asked to stand. I did not fancy Dr. Pattabhi's name for this and so, without contradicting it, I again said that Maulana must be made to agree. I left Bardoli soon after. On arrival in Allahabad I had a telegram informing me that Maulana had agreed. I went off straight to Almora and remained there till the day before the presidential election.

As regards the 'aspersions' resolution the facts are these. Apart from pressing you more than once to clear this matter up, as I considered



joint working between Gandhiji and you impossible unless this was done, I was not further interested in the matter. As to what Gandhiji or Rajendra Babu or Sardar Patel thought about it, it is for them to say. The definite impression they gave me was that they attached great importance to it.<sup>15</sup> When we reached Tripuri, I was told so again. My own definite opinion was that the matter might be referred to by you or by Rajendra Babu or both in brief statements to the A.I.C.C. and that no resolution should be brought up about it. The others would not agree to this. A suggestion was made that a resolution should be drafted for the A.I.C.C. The idea was not, I believe, to avoid the Congress but rather to clear the air before the subjects committee began. As usual, I was asked to draft the resolution. I said I would try to represent their viewpoint in so far as I could, although I did not agree with it. I drafted a brief resolution for the A.I.C.C. which expressed confidence in the old Working Committee and in Gandhiji's leadership and policy and further stated that there should be no break in the policy. There was no reference to 'aspersions' in it nor to the Working Committee being formed according to Gandhiji's wishes. The resolution was not approved and later a longer and amended resolution was produced by Rajendra Babu probably in consultation with others.<sup>16</sup> (Govind Ballabh Pant had not arrived till then.) I did not like this resolution and said so. I said that I did not think the 'aspersions' clause was objectionable *per se*, as it had been put down, but still it seemed to me undesirable and that it would produce resentment, especially as you were ill. I was told that very great importance was attached to some reference to this matter in the resolution as, without some such clearing up of the position for those whose honour had been tarnished, it would be impossible for them to offer their cooperation. For them to function, this was essential, as well as an adherence to Gandhiji's policy. Further, it was added that the reference had been made as mild and as impersonal as possible. Beyond that they could not go.

15. Subhas Bose contended that from talks with Vallabhbhai Patel, Rajendra Prasad and Abul Kalam Azad at Tripuri, he gathered that their "main grievance or allegation against me referred to the period prior to the Bardoli meeting of the Working Committee in January last", and "my election statement" was an "additional grievance". He added: "So your clients did not attach as much importance to the 'aspersions affair' as you did as their advocate....I may tell you that since the presidential election, you have done more to lower me in the estimation of the public than all the twelve ex-members of the Working Committee put together."
16. In the resolution, moved by G.B. Pant at Tripuri, the Working Committee also deplored "that any aspersions should have been cast against any of its members."

I had little to say after that. I made it clear that I thought the resolution unfortunate in some particulars, but as it was a matter of honour for them, I had no further concern with it. I would take no part in its discussion.

After that I do not know what happened. It was in the A.I.C.C. meeting that I found that Govind Ballabh Pant was going to move it. You were present there. Later, when the resolution was referred to the subjects committee, I approached some of the sponsors of the resolution and again suggested that some changes might be made. I pointed out that the original resolution was meant for the A.I.C.C. more or less as ending an episode and a controversy. But now that it was going to the Congress, it should be considered in a different light. Again I was told that it was a question of honour and unless this was cleared, how could they think in terms of cooperation. You will remember that they had prior to the Congress told you that they would be unable to cooperate with you. This resolution was looked upon by them as a possible bridge which might lead to an effort at cooperation. Without it there was no bridge.

I made one more strenuous effort to get the resolution varied on the eve of the open session when you were lying very ill. I failed, though there was ready agreement to accept Mr. Aney's proposal to refer it to the A.I.C.C. Mr. Aney seemed to think, and he gave all of us the impression, that his proposal was approved of by many friends in Bengal. We even gathered the impression (it may have been wrong) that you also approved of his proposal. What happened subsequently you know.

The next day at the Congress session held in the subjects committee pandal, as Govind Ballabh Pant was moving the resolution, Suresh Majumdar came to me and suggested that the resolution be referred to the A.I.C.C., that is he revived Mr. Aney's proposal.<sup>17</sup> He said that there had been a misunderstanding the night before and this proposal would be agreed to readily now. I told him that I was helpless in the matter especially at that stage when Pant was actually moving it. I had tried my best in various ways previously and he had better go to the parties concerned. I do not know what he did subsequently.

As for what was happening behind the scenes at Tripuri and in the delegates' camps probably your knowledge is greater than mine. I did not budge out of my hut, except for particular functions, and received few visitors. I was also partly occupied with the Egyptian delegates.

17. See pp. 246 and 292.



You refer to my 'clients'. I fear these 'clients' are not particularly pleased at my advocacy, and I have succeeded in becoming very unpopular with them. Quite a remarkable feat—to displease almost everybody concerned.

Whether this 'aspersions' resolution was unconstitutional or *ultra vires*, it is for you to decide. There is not much point in my giving my opinion on the question. I am naturally interested in Congress work being carried on and to see the removal of the sense of impasse that we have today. I am surprised that you should think that I had commenced a public agitation against you. After my talk with Gandhiji, I was much exercised and thought long over the situation. To my misfortune, I am affected by international happenings more than I should be. A very grave crisis had arisen in Europe which might have led to war. I felt that we should not passively await events. Sarat's telegram to Gandhiji indicated that he was not coming to see him. So nothing was being done while events marched. Thereupon I decided to send the telegram.<sup>18</sup> I showed it later to Gandhiji and one or two others. I did not give it or show it to any pressman. As a matter of fact, I did not mention it to anyone apart from the one or two persons with Gandhiji at the time. Even now I have not shown it to others. Probably somebody got second-hand information about it and gave it to the press.

Do you not think that the comparison between the resignation of the twelve Working Committee members before Tripuri and the position after the Congress is not a sound one? There was or should have been no stalemate because of their resignations. There might have been a stalemate if they had not resigned and insisted on functioning. Far from protesting against their resignations, I think there was no other course open to them on personal as well as public grounds.

When I sent you the telegram from Delhi, I knew well that you could not come over there.<sup>19</sup> I wanted you to suggest that Gandhiji might go to meet you in Dhanbad. I think he would have gone if you had invited him. Naturally he felt rather hesitant to do so uninvited. Whether the Tripuri resolution was valid or invalid, the initiative lay with you. Unless he knew how you would react to it, he could not take any step. Probably you felt that he might not be able to come to Dhanbad. When your secretary telephoned to me here, Gandhiji was

18. See p. 526.

19. In his telegram of 20 March 1939, Jawaharlal had urged the Congress President to meet Mahatma Gandhi early to settle the personnel of the Congress Working Committee in order to resolve the deadlock in the Congress organisation.

actually going to the station on his way to Delhi. Even if a personal meeting in the near future was difficult, I thought you might correspond with each other and thus clear the ground. You are very unjust to me when you suggest that I sent you the telegram from Delhi to embarrass you or to lead an agitation against you.

I might add that, so far as I am concerned, I did not like at all the idea of Gandhiji staying on in Delhi waiting for Gwyer's<sup>20</sup> award. Nor did I fancy his fast or the reference to Gwyer. I did not think a lot of the terms of settlement which terminated Gandhiji's fast.<sup>21</sup> I expressed my pleasure at his ending his fast and no more.

This letter is a terribly long one and I have written it almost at one continuous sitting, immediately after receiving your letter. Yet there are so many other matters which you mention and about which I could say something. There is no need for me to discuss my own failings which you point out. I admit them and regret them. You are right in saying that as President I functioned often as a secretary or a glorified clerk. I have long developed the habit of being my own secretary and clerk, and I fear I encroach in this way on others' preserves. It is also true that because of me Congress resolutions have tended to become long and verbose and rather like theses. In the Working Committee, I fear, I talked too much and did not always behave as I should.

I objected to your use of the words left and right because I thought that you were using them vaguely and loosely. Of course there is such a thing as a left and a right. It exists in the Congress and in the country. But unless the terms are used concisely they might and do create confusion.

I do not think I ever said that Rajkot and Jaipur<sup>22</sup> overshadow other issues. What I probably said was that Rajkot, meaning thereby Gandhiji's fast and its various implications, dominated the scene in many ways.

About the Bombay Trades Disputes Bill, I reached India after it had become law and the firing had taken place in Bombay. I mention this merely as a fact and not as an excuse.

20. Sir Maurice Gwyer (1878-1952); chief justice of India and president of the federal court, 1937-43; vice-chancellor of Delhi University, 1938-50.
21. Mahatma Gandhi broke his fast on 7 March 1939 as the Viceroy assured him that his charges of breach of faith against the ruler of Rajkot would be referred to the chief justice of India. Gwyer in his award held that the Thakore Sahib had undertaken to appoint the persons whom Vallabhbhai Patel might recommend and had not reserved any discretion to reject names which he did not approve.
22. See pp. 413 and 415.



In the U.P. Congress we have a rule that no one can be president for two years running of any committee from the P.C.C. to the village.

You refer to corruption in bringing delegates from various provinces to Tripuri. So far as my own province is concerned, I believe that something of this kind was done, though I am not sure. Probably elsewhere it was done also. May I suggest an inquiry in all the provinces? This would tone up our organisation.

You ask me for my interpretation of Pant's resolution. I do not think it was a motion of no-confidence, but it was certainly one which indicated a want of full confidence in your judgment. Positively, it is a vote of confidence in Gandhiji.

Am I a socialist or an individualist? Is there a necessary contradiction in the two terms? Are we all such integrated human beings that we can define ourselves precisely in a word or a phrase? I suppose I am temperamentally and by training an individualist, and intellectually a socialist, whatever all this might mean. I hope that socialism does not kill or suppress individuality; indeed I am attracted to it because it will release innumerable individuals from economic and cultural bondage. But I am a dull subject to discuss, especially at the tail-end of an inordinately long letter. Let us leave it at this that I am an unsatisfactory human being who is dissatisfied with himself and the world, and whom the petty world he lives in does not particularly like.

I dare not now, in the early hours of the morning, write about my views in regard to national or international affairs. I am not silent about them as a rule. As you have observed, I talk rather a lot and write even more. I shall leave it at that for the present. But I would add that while I champion lost causes frequently and condemn countries like Germany and Italy, I do not think I have ever given a certificate of good conduct to British and French imperialism.

I sent you, a day or two ago, some of the series of articles I contributed to the *National Herald* before Tripuri. One was missing. I am now sending the full set separately. I have not written any article for the *Free Press Journal* or any other paper recently.

Yours affly.,  
Jawahar

16. To V. K. Krishna Menon<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
April 4, 1939

My dear Krishna,

Indira has postponed her departure by a week as she could not get good accommodation. She will now sail from Bombay by the P. & O. *Strathaird*. It is possible that my sister Krishna and Hutheesing might also go by that boat. But they intend stopping in Egypt for two weeks.

The position here is outwardly static but in reality it grows worse. There seems an unbridgeable gap between Gandhiji and Subhas. Subhas owing to his illness has become even more difficult to deal with and he is full of an idea that there is a conspiracy against him. Gandhiji, on the other hand, does not quite appreciate the numerous failings of some of his own colleagues which resulted in the vote during the presidential election. For the moment Subhas has become a kind of a symbol of Bengal and it is quite impossible to argue with or about symbols. I feel very helpless and I see no way out for the moment.

One of Subhas's grievances against me, which is coming out more definitely in his correspondence, is his objection to the foreign policy I have sponsored. In a recent letter to me he talks about the folly of my espousing lost causes and of always condemning Germany and Italy. He calls himself a realist in foreign as well as internal politics. This realism of his leads him to entirely different conclusions. With this background you can appreciate how difficult it is for me to think of close cooperation with him. On the other hand, Gandhiji thinks more and more on the lines of a homogeneous group forming the Congress executive. Either way I do not see where I come in.

Subhas has lately come to the conclusion, most unjustifiably, that I am pulling the strings against him from behind the scenes. As a matter of fact, I have done my utmost to stand up for him and to tone down the hostility of the old leaders to him. But for some reason or other the Calcutta press has followed this line against me with vigour and I have no desire for argument. This particular hostile attitude will no doubt die down and it has no great importance. But what is more important is the emergence, in Bengal and elsewhere, of communal and semi-communal groups who have become champions of Subhas and who are taking up today a more definite attitude in regard to foreign affairs.

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.



You will find in the *Hindusthan Standard* favourable comments on Savarkar's speeches attacking Congress foreign policy.

Apart from the Congress tangle, there are many other distressing developments. There is of course the communal question and the riots. The U.P. Government has had to face this specially and even in Allahabad we have had a little dose again. The thing is almost becoming chronic on a low scale. There is no doubt that it is affecting the police and the lower magistracy. Both of these, in our province, happen to be overwhelmingly Muslim, in spite of the fact that Muslims are only 15% of the population. For the last thirty years or more the government followed a policy of increasing the Muslim element in the police service.

Then there are the higher officials of the I.C.S., often English. Some of these, I believe, have functioned honestly while others, I am sure, have done everything to nurse communal tension.

In Cawnpore and Benares specially, and to some extent elsewhere, there has been a strong upheaval of Hindu sentiment and communalism. They say that the government does not protect them from Muslim attacks, the police and officials usually favour the other side, and so they must organise themselves for their own defence. Defence leads to aggression when something happens. This something has so far usually been an unwarranted Muslim attack on a marriage procession or music in a temple.

But the real thing about the communal riots is still more disturbing. There can be no doubt that they are now political in origin and they are kept up for political reasons, that is to say, the idea that by permitting disorder and terrorist methods the government will be discredited and will surrender. This idea which was vague enough to begin with has developed, though, of course, there are many elements in the Muslim League who are conservatively inclined and fear too much disorder. It is not a question now of gaining this privilege or that but rather of preparing for the day when a big crisis comes to India and the world. There is a general feeling that the British Empire is fading away and will not be able to do much in India. When this happens the group which is organised for violence may succeed and a general state of disorder will help it to succeed. Definitely fascist ideas are spreading not only in the Muslim League but in the Hindu Mahasabha also. You know that the Muslim League has, to some extent, expressed its sympathy with Franco. There is also the belief that Hitler is helping the Arabs in Palestine. The Hindu Mahasabha praises Japan. All this is so far in a minor key.

Have you heard of the Khaksar movement?<sup>2</sup> This started in the twenties, I think, rather quietly. It is called a non-political movement, meant for social service. This has developed rapidly in northern India, almost entirely amongst the Muslims. It has military technique and training (without arms) and absolute submission to the leader, Inayatullah Khan.<sup>3</sup> They have fine military camps annually, last year's one consisting of ten thousand men. The leader Inayatullah has recently come out in praise of Hitler and his methods.

It is said that the Khaksars number about four hundred thousand, well-uniformed, and more or less trained men. Where is all this money coming from? There have been no obvious public collections and I am told that they have large sums at their disposal. It is believed, I think even by government circles, that the funds come from the Nazis.

In western India, Hindu communal volunteers have grown in recent years. There also, it is suspected, that foreign money comes in.

All these are some of the disturbing aspects of the present-day India. There are many others. Unfortunately Subhas is curiously insensitive to all this and, to some extent, is exploited by these various elements. He is not in touch with many developments outside Bengal. Gandhiji senses these things better by instinct. But his way of dealing with them is sometimes difficult to understand.

You might have seen the Chatfield Report.<sup>4</sup> I understand that behind it there lay definite instructions for the rapid increase of munition production in India. What is interesting is that these munitions are of a type which cannot be effectively used against a foreign enemy. They are more suitable for dealing with frontier villages or internally in India.

2. The Khaksar movement aimed at purifying Islam. Politically, it urged the Congress and the Muslim League to resolve their differences and fight for the full independence of India; it was declared an unlawful association by all the provincial governments in June 1941. The movement was disbanded by Allama Mashriqi after independence.
3. (1888-1963); popularly known as Allama Mashriqi; a wrangler at Cambridge; imprisoned several times during the freedom struggle.
4. Alfred Ernle, later Baron Chatfield (1873-1967); first sea lord and chief of naval staff, 1933-38; chairman, expert committee on Indian defence, 1938-39; Minister for Co-ordination of Defence, 1939-40.

The committee on Indian defence headed by him was appointed in 1938 to indicate "the role of the Land and Air Forces of India in relation to the defence problems of India and Europe". It reported that India was liable for the defence of the empire and recommended that India be made self-sufficient in munitions.



I must end this letter now as I am going soon to Lucknow for a few days. There is so much else that I might write to you about. But for the moment it is enough to set you thinking.

Yours affectionately,  
Jawaharlal

## 17. To Mahatma Gandhi<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
April 17, 1939

My dear Bapu,

Pyarelal has been sending me copies of your correspondence with Subhas. I fear that this correspondence has reached a deadlock and I do not see any way out. I am in the unfortunate position of a person who does not agree with either of the viewpoints taken. Because of this, I have thought it best to remain silent and not to write to anybody or say anything in public. But it seems to me that it is not good enough for us to drift along in this helpless manner. The issues are too serious and the consequences distressing to contemplate.

It seems to me that there is no way out unless you are prepared to shoulder the responsibility yourself to a very large extent. You have to give the lead and you cannot wait for things just to happen. Subhas has numerous failings but he is susceptible to a friendly approach. I am sure that if you made up your mind to do so you could find a way out.

I realise the importance of Rajkot,<sup>2</sup> but I think you will agree with me that the larger Congress issue is infinitely more important and is likely to govern all our activities. Therefore I would beg of you to address yourself to the latter, even at the cost of your not attending to Rajkot affairs for a while. The idea that you may not attend the A.I.C.C. meeting is alarming. That simply means that conditions should go on deteriorating and that the Congress should go to pieces. The right way is for some settlement to be arrived at before the A.I.C.C. meeting. To leave this issue to the A.I.C.C. is to make confusion worse confounded.

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L. Also printed in *A Bunch of Old Letters*, (Bombay, 1960), pp. 379-381.
2. After Gwyer's award, the claims made by the Muslims, the Bhayats and the depressed classes caused a deadlock in the composition of the committee for suggesting reforms; and Mahatma Gandhi renounced the award and conceded defeat.

I wish you could have met Subhas. Quite apart from any feasible outcome of this visit, this would have been helpful in many ways.

The delay in the formation of the Working Committee has been bad. But for us to meet only to quarrel will be worse. It would be preferable, though I dislike it intensely, for the A.I.C.C. meeting to be postponed by a week or two in order to suit your convenience and to give more chance to have a settlement.

I have just received a letter from Subhas in which he asks me to pay a visit to him for a few hours to discuss the situation.<sup>3</sup> I fear our talk cannot lead to anything definite, for I cannot deliver the goods. Still, I cannot say no to him and I propose to go there in a day or two. What I shall say to him is not clear in my mind. For the moment I think that the only advice I can give him is for him to say to you that he leaves it to you completely to suggest the names of the Working Committee. He may make certain suggestions of his to you but on the clear understanding that you may accept them or reject them. As regards the programme, this will be governed by the resolutions of the Tripuri Congress, which, among other things, indicate definitely that there should be no break with the past programme.<sup>4</sup>

If Subhas agrees to this course, then responsibility rests with you and you cannot shirk it. I think now, as I thought in Delhi, that you should accept Subhas as President. To try to push him out seems to me to be an exceedingly wrong step. As for the Working Committee, it is for you to decide. But I do think the idea of homogeneity, if narrowly interpreted, will not lead to peace or effective working. Some kind of homogeneity there must of course be. Otherwise we cannot function. I do not think that a few individuals in the Working Committee make any radical difference to the policy. Of course, it is difficult to accept individuals whose *bona fides* one does not trust at all. But the principle of homogeneity should not be extended to differences in political approach, provided the common background of work is accepted. After all, we must remember that by having a homogeneous executive we do not create a homogeneous Congress. The latter is easier of achievement if we have a larger homogeneity in view.

3. On Subhas Bose's invitation, Jawaharlal went to Jealgora in Dhanbad district on 19 April 1939.

4. In a resolution moved by G.B. Pant, it was stated that "the Congress declares its firm adherence to the fundamental policies of the Congress which have governed its programme in the past twenty years under the guidance of Mahatma Gandhi and is definitely of the opinion that there should be no break in these policies and that these should continue to govern the Congress programme in the future."



You have been greatly distressed at developments in the Congress during the last many months and you have condemned corruption, etc.<sup>5</sup> I think every sane element in the Congress, whatever his political views, is eager to deal with this problem. I have been paying a great deal of attention to many factors outside the Congress and I must say that I am alarmed at the trend of events and the development of new forces. I am not merely referring to the communal question. There are deeper forces at work. If, at this juncture, the Congress weakens and disrupts, the consequences may well be disastrous. We must hold together. I would beg of you, therefore, to make up your mind to settle this matter, even though that way of settlement may not be to the liking of all of us. Only so can we go in the direction of our choice. Otherwise we are stuck up.

A word about myself. It is my misfortune to be too much of an individualist. I found it very difficult to pull on, in the later days, at the Working Committee meetings and probably I became a nuisance to my colleagues also. And this not through any lack of goodwill on either side. Hence I felt that I should not continue in it. For even more potent reasons I felt it difficult to think of joining a Committee of a different kind formed by Subhas. My feelings are still the same. But in view of this deadlock that has arisen, if a way out is found and my presence in the Committee is considered helpful, I shall agree to serve as such.<sup>6</sup> This is not a prospect that I cherish. But I do feel that I cannot shirk this responsibility if it is offered to me under the present extraordinary circumstances.

Yours affectionately,  
Jawaharlal

5. Regretting large-scale impersonation that took place at Bombay in the election of delegates for the Tripuri Congress, Mahatma Gandhi wrote in *Harijan* of 28 January 1939: "Besides impersonation there is the wholesale tampering with the Congress registers which contain bogus names... Strife at Congress elections is becoming a common occurrence. The indiscipline of Congressmen is on the increase everywhere. Many of them make irresponsible, even violent, speeches... Kisans of Bihar are supposed to be Congressmen. Their leaders are Congressmen. But Bihar ministers live in perpetual dread of kisan risings and kisan marches.

Out of the present condition of the Congress I see nothing but anarchy and red ruin in front of the country. Shall we face the harsh truth at Tripuri?"

6. Jawaharlal did not join the Congress Working Committee constituted by the A.I.C.C. at Calcutta.

## 18. To Rajendra Prasad<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
April 17, 1939

My dear Rajendra Babu,

I wrote to you a few days ago about the Jamshedpur matter. I do not know how this has progressed. If you want me to go there, please let me know in good time.

I have remained silent and passive in regard to the Congress deadlock for the last three or four weeks. That of course does not mean that I have not been agitated by it. But I saw no way of doing or saying anything helpful and so I remained silent. I have just received a letter from Subhas in which he invites me to visit him for a few hours to discuss the situation. I cannot throw much light on it, I fear, but I cannot say no to him and I propose to be with him on the 19th.

I have just written a letter to Bapu, a copy of which I enclose.<sup>2</sup> This will give you some idea of how I feel about it. I should like to make an earnest appeal to you also to move in this matter. I think that you are one of the very few persons who can help greatly in solving this present tangle. What you should do I will not venture to suggest, but it is essential that something must be done now before the A.I.C.C. meets and we quarrel amongst ourselves and in public view. Perhaps it might be desirable for me to meet you. Could you please let me know where you are likely to be during the next two or three days? As I shall probably be with Subhas on the 19th you might send me a telegram there.

Yours affectionately,  
Jawaharlal

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. See the preceding item.



19. To Subhas Chandra Bose<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
April 17, 1939

My dear Subhas,

I have just received your letter of the 15th April.<sup>2</sup> Pyarelal has been sending me copies of the correspondence between you and Gandhiji. I do not know if all the letters have been sent to me. But some of the earlier ones have certainly come.

I must confess that I am very much distressed by developments and I do not quite see what should be done, or rather anything that I see is so out of harmony with what you suggest, or what Gandhiji suggests, that I am left high and dry. Under these circumstances, I feel peculiarly helpless. And yet it is obvious that each one of us must shoulder the responsibility of putting an end to this impasse and cannot shirk it. It is not a personal matter or a question of prestige for the individuals concerned but the far greater question of how the Congress and India are going to function in these critical days.

Your suggestion that I should visit you has come rather suddenly and taken me by surprise. I have a number of engagements during the next few days and for the moment I do not quite see what to do with them. But I cannot say no to you, specially as the question in issue is so important. I shall try my utmost to visit you soon. I shall wire to you when I can come.

Yours affectionately,  
Jawaharlal

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. Subhas Bose had written that he had told Mahatma Gandhi repeatedly that he could neither form a "homogeneous cabinet" as insisted upon by him nor announce his programme. He added that "after making some alternative suggestions, I have ended by saying that, failing everything, he should accept the responsibility of forming the Working Committee—since I cannot give effect to his advice to form a homogeneous cabinet..." He also wanted the stalemate to be ended before the A.I.C.C. meeting by personal discussions with Mahatma Gandhi.

## 20. To V.K. Krishna Menon<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
April 18, 1939

My dear Krishna,

Your cable came a short while ago and I have sent an answer. It is not easy for me, under present conditions, to say what the Congress may or may not do. Nobody except Subhas can speak in the name of the Congress, and he can speak alone without being sure of the action to follow. This is really unfortunate and I still see no way out. There is a complete deadlock between him and Gandhiji. As for me, I do not agree with the position taken by either of them. Subhas has asked me to see him and I am going to do so tomorrow.

So far as the Government of India Act is concerned, at any rate, our provincial Congress committee has taken up a clear line and treated it as a major issue. We have directed the provincial government to resist it and not to submit to any incursion by the central government.

In the event of war, I am almost sure that conflict with the central government will be precipitated on many issues.

Regarding the Paris conference,<sup>2</sup> I wrote to you some time back that I think you should certainly go there as our member of the I.P.C. It would have been better for you to get an authority from Subhas, but even otherwise you should go. So far as I am concerned, I associate myself with that conference and you can convey my greetings to it.

As for your suggestions about our foreign policy being controlled by a committee, all this is premature when even the Working Committee cannot be formed. Of course, I agree with you that it is very necessary. But there is one difficulty that if we go into details, differences of opinion arise. Subhas, as you know, differs from me considerably in regard to foreign policy. Gandhiji does not differ fundamentally but his non-violence comes in the way to some extent.

I think it is time that we attracted attention to the problems of defence. If you can send material on this to us, it will be welcome.

You should carry on, as you have been carrying on, but you will no doubt realise the difficulty of your, or for the matter of that of my,

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. The World Committee against War and Fascism organised a World Conference on Peace, Democracy and the Defence of the Rights of Man to be held in May 1939 in Paris.



definitely committing the Congress to a policy which might be objected to by Subhas or others.

I am afraid I cannot help you at all in regard to the refugees.

Yours affectionately,  
Jawaharlal

**21. To Subhas Chandra Bose<sup>1</sup>**

Allahabad  
April 20, 1939

My dear Subhas,

I have sent the following telegram to Gandhiji:

Had long talk with Subhas. Feel your guidance control situation essential. Earnestly hope you will agree. Meanwhile trust you will not commit yourself by public statement. Please wire when what route going Calcutta.

Yours affectionately,  
Jawaharlal

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

**22. To Mahatma Gandhi<sup>1</sup>**

Allahabad  
April 20, 1939

My dear Bapu,

I returned this morning from Jealgora. I had several hours' talk with Subhas yesterday. I need not go into this in any detail but two things stand out. One is the absolute necessity of a solution of the present deadlock before the A.I.C.C. meets. Two, that you are the only person who can do it.

1. Rajendra Prasad Papers, National Archives of India.

As regards the first, it seems to me clear that if we face the A.I.C.C. without any constructive suggestion, there will be a continuation of trouble and conflict which would be bad enough at any time, and disastrous under present circumstances and in view of the deepening crisis.

As regards two, I realise fully the difficulties that have arisen and which have been accentuated by the correspondence you have had with Subhas. I feel, however, that it is possible to tone down those difficulties if you are prepared to take a good deal of responsibility. So far as the programme of work is concerned, there are obvious differences between what Subhas says and what many others feel. But in actual practice, it is clear that there should be no basic change in our programme or outlook, as indeed has been decided by the Congress. In effect, it comes to this that the Working Committee should be formed according to your wishes and the programme should be carried through under your guidance. No one can tell what the future will bring, but for the present there will be general relief, if this is done, and a clearing of atmosphere.

I understood from Subhas that he was agreeable to do this, not in any spirit of resentment but because he felt that it was the right course now. He acts strangely at times and is fond of issuing statements which create difficulties. I hope, however, that this kind of thing will lessen.

I advised Subhas not to publish his correspondence with you, as this would greatly add to our difficulties. May I also suggest to you that no statement might be issued by you committing yourself to any course at this stage? Very soon you will be meeting Subhas, and it will be far better if you issue a statement after meeting him and others.

I should have liked to meet you soon but I do not know how to do so. If you could go to Calcutta early it would be very helpful. I would personally prefer that you meet Subhas at a quiet place other than Calcutta. Perhaps you could break journey to Calcutta somewhere and Subhas could meet you there. If I know your programme I might try to join you *en route*.

I am concerned to read in today's paper that you have got fever.

Yours affectionately,  
Jawaharlal



23. To Abul Kalam Azad<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
April 20, 1939

My dear Maulana,

Your letter of the 17th. Surely you ought to know me better than to thank me for my efforts to look after your comforts here. What else could you expect anyone to do?

I went to see Subhas yesterday at his request and I had a long talk with him. I have looked through the correspondence between him and Gandhiji. This is, as you say, very distressing correspondence, and it creates fresh difficulties. There was some talk of publishing this correspondence but I have dissuaded Subhas from doing so. I have also requested Gandhiji not to issue any statement which might commit him.

I enclose a copy of a letter I am sending to Gandhiji.<sup>2</sup> I am quite sure that the only thing to be done now is for Subhas to leave the formation of the Working Committee entirely to Gandhiji and to promise his loyal support to whatever is done. There are sure to be difficulties because of the way Subhas thinks as well as other matters. But we have to face these difficulties. Any other course means far greater trouble and difficulty. I think that in practice many of these difficulties will be controlled and Subhas also will not add to them. The main thing is that we should not meet the A.I.C.C. before some solution is found. Subhas was agreeable to what I suggested but, of course, I do not know what reservations he might have in his mind. Anyway, I think we shall not trouble ourselves with possible future difficulties. It is something to get over the present difficulty. In view of the national and international situation, it is urgently necessary that we should start functioning here as a Working Committee.

My talk with Subhas was quite friendly and frank. Unfortunately he has been too much surrounded by one-sided accounts and rumours. I think it will be a very good thing if you write to him and express the desire to meet him. He will be in Calcutta tomorrow night.

I have had a long letter from Rafi Ahmed in which he tells me all the developments in the Shia-Sunni affair. He met Sir Sultan Ahmed. It appears that Sir Sultan Ahmed is going to Lucknow again to see the ministers. Hafiz Ibrahim has gone to Delhi to see the Ulemas there.

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. See the preceding item.

Rafi suggested to him that the government would accept any recommendation of a committee consisting of you and him.

Rafi Ahmed felt that in your letter you had been unfair to Pantji and written in somewhat harsh language about his part in these affairs.<sup>3</sup>

If Gandhiji goes to Calcutta sometime before the A.I.C.C., I shall also try to get there then.

Yours affectionately,  
Jawaharlal

3. On 18 April 1939, Rafi Ahmed Kidwai wrote: "I am afraid Maulana Abul Kalam in his long letter has not been fair to Pantji. The tone of the letter is very objectionable; but I would not blame Maulana Saheb for it. The responsibility lies with his secretary."

## 24. Appeal to Subhas Bose to Withdraw Resignation<sup>1</sup>

Two statements have been submitted to the house, one by Mahatma Gandhi and the other by Mr. Subhas Chandra Bose.<sup>2</sup> Many difficulties are ahead of us, and they require a solution. We cannot leave Calcutta before we solve all our difficulties and thereby smoothen our path.

For the last two or three months much mud has been flung so far as the members of the Congress are concerned, and this has distracted our attention from our normal business. This is not surprising in the least. The Congress has grown into a big organisation and hence the controversy that has been going on among its members cannot come as a surprise. But now I appeal to you all to consider all the issues which have caused so much heart-burning among ourselves. I want to do this

1. Speech at the A.I.C.C. meeting in Calcutta, 29 April 1939. From *The Hindu*, 30 April 1939.
2. Mahatma Gandhi's letter of 29 April 1939, addressed to Subhas Bose and submitted to the A.I.C.C. on the same date, stated: "You had asked me to give you in terms of Pandit Pant's resolution the names for the Working Committee... Much has happened since Tripuri. Knowing your own views and knowing how you and most of the members differ in fundamentals it seems to me that if I gave you names it would be an imposition on you." And Subhas Bose, tendering his resignation on 29 April 1939, stated that having failed in his efforts to arrive "at an informal solution" of the problem, he felt that the A.I.C.C. might be able to settle the matter "if it can have a new President."



calmly. We should do our utmost to bury the hatchet. We must look forward and should forget the past. We have to take stock of the situation that has arisen.

The world at present is heading towards a crisis. A world war may come on us at any moment. We should consider all the problems confronting us today with a calm and cool mind. We have also to consider the issues which will arise in case a world war breaks out. We shall then have no time to consider the sheafs of resolutions that have been given notice of for this session.

The Congress has gathered great strength and has become a mighty organisation. Our enemies, too, are not sitting idle. They are trying to present a united front against us. The communal problem and the question of the Indian states stand in the way of our progress. In spite of our attaining strength, our difficulties have not lessened, but on the other hand they have increased. We must think calmly of all these issues. We must sink our differences and stand united in this hour of crisis.

We have Mr. Subhas Bose's statement already before us. I do not want you to indulge in controversies, as our differences are not over principles but only superficial. Our experience has always been that whenever a serious situation arises, we find ourselves standing united. I have studied the problem that has caused the present deadlock, and have arrived at the conclusion that there is no difference between Mr. Subhas Chandra Bose and Mahatma Gandhi on any issue involving principles.

From Mr. Subhas Chandra Bose's statement, we have come to know that he had been to Mahatma Gandhi with a view to implementing the Pant resolution passed at Tripuri. We have also come to know the difficulties which Mahatma Gandhi apprehends in trying to implement that resolution. In the light of this knowledge, I now appeal to Mr. Subhas Chandra Bose to withdraw his resignation. I also appeal to him to consider the issues which are likely to arise from his action.

I do not want that there should be any party feelings or dissensions in the Congress. Differences among the members of an organisation like ours will weaken it, and cannot certainly be conducive to its continued progress. We do not want to see our opponents rejoice over our differences and the consequent weakness in our ranks. With a view to solving the problem of the formation of the Working Committee, I suggest that the outgoing members of the Working Committee should continue to hold office. We want to maintain the *status quo* and not to deviate from our time-honoured practice. We must, therefore, tide over the crisis facing us at any cost. I do not think that it will be a wise course for us to change horses in mid-stream. Two of our old

colleagues, namely, Seth Jamnalal Bajaj and Mr. Jairamdas Doulatram are not in a position to join the new cabinet. One of them is in jail and the other is ill. I suggested to the President to replace these two by two other members.

In conclusion, I appeal to you all to urge the President to withdraw his resignation and constitute the Working Committee as suggested by me and carry on the work of the Congress.<sup>3</sup>

3. Subhas Bose declared that he could not withdraw his resignation if the A.I.C.C. was not prepared to show consideration to his view that the Working Committee should be a composite one in which there should be some inclusion of fresh blood every year, and the next day he resigned the presidentship.

## 25. Reasons for Not Joining the Congress Working Committee<sup>1</sup>

I did not join the new Working Committee because I felt that at the present juncture I could serve the cause better by remaining outside. For some time past I have felt I should be out of the Working Committee, though even so I would have cooperated with it to a large extent. So far as action is concerned, there is little conflict among the various groups of the Congress. But the ideological differences have inevitably grown. This is natural and is a sign of vitality, if the differences are kept on the plane of principles and are not confused with personal and other issues.

I feel that not only has this gulf grown considerably but it is becoming more and more confusing and issues are getting mixed up. To some extent I am in a position to understand and appreciate the points of view of the old school as well as of the new. I feel that by remaining outside the Committee I may be able to help to some extent in removing the false issues that have grown up and in reducing to some extent the gulf that separates the rival ideologies.

If any crisis occurs it is obvious that all of us, to whatever group we might belong, will join together, and if it is necessary under those circumstances, the Working Committee can be reformed. Even otherwise the Committee will have all the cooperation that I can give. It is true

1. Interview to *The Times of India*, Calcutta, 2 May 1939. *The Times of India*, 3 May 1939.



I had agreed to continue on the Committee, and the resolution that I proposed for the A.I.C.C. in the earlier stages would have led to this. This was because I was keenly desirous of not doing anything which might prevent the formation of the Working Committee agreed to by all. But since that did not come off, the question of my remaining in the Working Committee presently does not arise.

## 26. On the Ideological Differences in the Congress<sup>1</sup>

I wish to caution the people against blindly following the lead from above. They should try to study the various problems that confront us all in the country at this time. Unless the people understand their own problems, a handful of leaders, however big they may be, cannot give them a lead to any useful purpose. The public mind should be so trained as to understand the international situation and the possibility of war breaking out any moment.

I also want you not to attach importance to the superficial struggle of the different ideologies in the country. For example, there are frequent communal troubles between different communities, and in Lucknow we saw quarrels taking place between two sections of the Muslims. I would therefore stress the need for our going deeper into our problems and trying for the removal of the fundamental differences so that the bonds of unity may be forged between various communities in the country and we may acquire sufficient strength to grapple with our major problems.

The regrettable incidents at the A.I.C.C. are not new to me.<sup>2</sup> I have faced many such demonstrations and I would rather allow myself to be assaulted by the people than be taken like a prisoner by volunteers within a cordon. I would appeal to those outside Bengal not to make much of these demonstrations, but to fraternize with the people of Bengal. To whichever part of India the people may belong, from my wide travels in India, I have found that there lies underneath a fundamental unity among the masses. Our strength has increased considerably and there has been a wonderful mass awakening. This strength

1. Speech at Calcutta, 2 May 1939. From *The Hindustan Times*, 3 May 1939.

2. On coming out of the A.I.C.C. *pandal* on 29 April 1939, Jawaharlal, G.B. Pant and J.B. Kripalani faced a hostile demonstration, and their car had to be escorted out by the volunteers.

also underlines the need to learn to abide by the decisions of the majority in a democratic organisation.

I am a socialist and I feel that the problems of the country would ultimately be solved on socialist lines. Yet I have to do many things for the sake of unity which are not palatable to me. We must always remember the lesson of our past history that India has always suffered on account of petty squabbles.

Though the people attached too much importance to the struggle of ideologies, yet, perhaps, the most important work done by the A.I.C.C. was the passing of the resolution against India's participating in any international war.<sup>3</sup> The present question of war is very intricate.

Such is the state of international diplomacy at present that the policy pursued by the British National Government under Mr. Chamberlain has resulted in the betrayal of Austria and Czechoslovakia. I am so disgusted with England's policies that even if I were an Englishman I would refuse to fight under the banner of Mr. Chamberlain. As far as India is concerned, there cannot be any question of her participation in a world war unless she is free and is allowed to decide on her own course of action.

There is an amending bill to the Government of India Act which is before the British Parliament. If it becomes law, the so-called provincial autonomy would become a farce. The central government can, as a result of this amendment, take control of the provinces any moment war breaks out. I would, therefore, like the people to understand the real significance of this retrograde move, made so soon after the introduction of provincial autonomy, and urge them to oppose with all their strength any such move to usurp the little power that they have secured in the provinces.

I may also say a word about the new Working Committee on which Subhas Bose and I have declined to serve. I have made no secret of the fact that I have all along felt that I would be more useful to the Congress by remaining outside the Working Committee. I, at any rate, have felt that by remaining outside, I can unite the new forces in the country. There is no question of dignity involved in this. The people should not misunderstand me and think that I have cut myself off from the Congress.

3. See p. 300.



**27. To K. Rama Rao<sup>1</sup>**

Allahabad  
May 3, 1939

Dear Rama Rao,

The situation that has arisen as a result of the A.I.C.C. meeting is a difficult one and requires careful handling. I might later write on this subject. Meanwhile, the following hints might help you :

(1) There should be no further reference to the rowdy behaviour of the visitors or the crowds in Calcutta. Importance need not be attached to it.

(2) Subhas Babu's resignation and his refusal to withdraw it should be regretted. So also his and my refusal to serve on the new Working Committee. It should be made clear however that this does not involve any change in our basic policy.

(3) More particularly our policy regarding the international crisis and the war situation remains exactly the same and has the unanimous support of all elements in the Congress. The one resolution passed by the A.I.C.C. which has vital importance was the resolution on the war danger and the amendment of the Government of India Act. On this there was no difference of opinion whatsoever and the resolution, put forward by the new Working Committee and moved by Jawaharlal Nehru, was accepted unanimously by the house. We are apt to attach unnecessary importance to the conflicts about some personal and domestic issues and forget this unanimity on the broad lines of national policy. It is the latter that counts in the end.

(4) It is obvious however that we cannot ignore the differences in outlook and policy in regard to domestic matters, which have been evident within the Congress during the past few months. But while not ignoring them we must look at them in proper perspective and realise that in all the larger matters of national or international policy there is no marked difference of opinion. In regard to national policy, the Tripuri Congress laid down that there should be no break in the old policy and reaffirmed its faith in Gandhiji's leadership. Subhas Babu made it clear in Calcutta that he accepted this basis of our work as indeed all Congressmen must accept the decision of the annual session. The differences that led to Subhas Babu's resignation appear to be connected with the formation of the Working Committee

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

and his desire to have a certain new element in it. We entirely appreciate this desire and think that the Working Committee would be strengthened by such minor changes. Of course, in considering such matters a principle may be accepted, and yet difficulties might arise in giving it application. It appears that there was no agreement in this matter of application. We regret this. Under the circumstances, the only way out was for the old leaders of the Working Committee to be given full charge as has been done. We hope however that they will themselves introduce fresh blood into the Committee soon. We understand that this is their desire also.

(5) Jawaharlal Nehru's decision not to serve on the Working Committee is unfortunate and will inevitably give rise to a great deal of misapprehension and regret. It is a little difficult to think of a Working Committee without him. For many years past he has not only been a prominent feature in it but has usually occupied responsible offices. In particular, he has made himself responsible for the foreign policy of the Congress and has come to be looked upon as the adviser of the Working Committee on foreign affairs. His special knowledge of the subject and his intimate acquaintance with foreign statesmen has made him peculiarly fitted for this task. At this particular juncture when foreign affairs and international crises dominate the scene, his presence is all the more necessary. We are assured by him as well as by President Rajendra Prasad, however, that both Jawaharlal and Subhas Babu will continue to give their full cooperation to the Working Committee. This relieves us somewhat and the first evidence of this was the fact that Jawaharlal moved the war resolution recommended by the Working Committee to the A.I.C.C. We earnestly trust and believe that there will be full cooperation between the Working Committee and Jawaharlal and Subhas Babu, in both international and national affairs.

(6) In the series of articles that Jawaharlal contributed in the *National Herald* prior to the Tripuri Congress, he showed us how he had often come into ideological conflict with his colleagues in the Working Committee and how he had been on the point of resigning from the presidentship on many occasions. That conflict has been and is there and we are not surprised that it should have induced him, for the moment at least, to sever his connection with the Working Committee. He has stated that he felt that he could serve the cause and the Congress better by keeping outside the Working Committee and by trying to reduce the gulf that has arisen between the various groups in the Congress. Perhaps he is right in this because this is an urgent matter for all of us. Whatever these differences



might be, and they are important, it is obvious to the meanest intelligence that they are small as compared to the major problems before us on which there is very little difference. It is up to us therefore to concentrate on these major problems.

(7) The Working Committee must realise that it has to carry with it the vital new elements in the Congress. To ignore them or to try to override them is not the path of wisdom. The country today, and indeed the whole world, is one vast laboratory of ideas and urges, and no great popular movement can flourish or succeed without taking account of this. We feel that we must carry on our work essentially, as the Tripuri Congress has said, without a break from the past. We have, however, to build on that past and take into account the novel situation that has arisen. A living movement changes with the time. Not to do so is to depart from the life of the people and to be stagnant. We trust, therefore, that the Working Committee will give thought to this and learn the lessons of the past few months. We are convinced also that the so-called new elements in the country must also realise what the situation demands from them. If they are to shoulder responsibility at any time they must put on the mantle of responsibility now and consider all questions not purely in terms of dissatisfaction and disgruntled groups but in the spirit of constructive statesmanship. It is not easy to find easy solution of any of our problems. Nevertheless, we have to think in terms of solutions and not merely in terms of dissatisfaction.

(8) In the country today there are numerous tendencies towards disruption. The Congress is the only organisation which can ultimately combat these disruptive tendencies. If the Congress itself falls a prey to it, what hope is there for us? We must therefore discourage all such tendencies within the Congress and thus prepare ourselves to face our problems. It is important therefore that the effort to tighten up the Congress and change its rules so as to make it a more effective organisation should be successful.

(9) The immediate issue before the country is the danger of international crisis and war. To that every Congress committee must address itself and educate public opinion. We must get ready for the crisis that overhangs us.

(10) We trust that Subhas Babu and Jawaharlal Nehru will be back in the Working Committee before long. Meanwhile, we hope that the unpleasant chapter of argument and mutual criticism which began some months back will be considered as closed and the Congress and the country will look ahead and prepare for the future.

I have indicated above the general lines of your criticism. You might incorporate these in one or more leading articles.

I expect to be in Lucknow on the morning of the 6th.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

**28. To V.K. Krishna Menon<sup>1</sup>**

Allahabad  
May 4, 1939

My dear Krishna,

The recent happenings in Calcutta in connection with the A.I.C.C. meeting must have puzzled you. It is a little difficult to explain the complex situation. I was pressed hard to join the new Working Committee but I decided not to do so, although I promised such cooperation as I could give. Probably I shall be invited to attend their meetings and shall accept the invitation. So far as their general policy is concerned there will be no change and in any event whatever influence I have in regard to it will continue.

I was utterly dissatisfied with many things that happened in Calcutta and I felt that I should register that dissatisfaction by not joining the Committee. If, however, a big crisis comes suddenly, like a war, there will probably be a refashioning of the Committee and I might join.

Subhas Bose, so far as the Calcutta proceedings were concerned, seemed to me to be very accommodating and desirous of pulling together. But there is so much suspicion and prejudice against him and some of his close associates are considered so undesirable that some people find it difficult to think in terms of close cooperation with him. There is some talk of Subhas forming and leading a new party. I do not know much about it but such a party will be a collection of odd elements whose chief slogan will be opposition to the powers that be. M.N. Roy is gaining popularity in Bengal though organisationally he has no strength at all.

You must have seen the war resolution passed by the A.I.C.C. So far as the amendment of the India Act is concerned the resolution is as strong as it can be and the provincial governments have been given

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.



explicit directions. Thus there can be no doubt now that this must be treated by the Congress as a major issue and the consequences of conflict faced, if necessary.

Gandhiji is of this opinion. In regard to war also he is perfectly clear that there can be no cooperation at all between us and the British Government and we must oppose every kind of imposition. His reason in doing so is not quite the same as mine or others'. In the main, he opposes India's participation in a war because of his doctrine of non-violence. In effect, however, so far as our policy is concerned, we arrive at the same conclusion.

The A.I.C.C. is likely to meet about the middle of June in Bombay. Probably I shall go to the Frontier Province for the last week or ten days of May. Things there are pretty bad.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal

## 29. To Vishambhar Dayal Tripathi<sup>1</sup>

Lucknow  
May 7, 1939

My dear Vishambhar Dayalji,<sup>2</sup>

Your letter of the 6th missed me in Allahabad and was forwarded to me here.<sup>3</sup> I have just read it. When I wrote to you about the youth conference notice and the *Sangram*, I did not show my letter to anyone.<sup>4</sup> I am quite certain that no one at my end saw it or could have given it to the press. Nor did I mention the fact that I had written to you to anyone as far as I remember. It seems clear to me that if one got the contents of it, it must have been from Unao, though how, I do not

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. (1899-1959); a Congressman of Unao; founder-member, Congress Socialist Party; general secretary, All India Forward Bloc, 1939; member of U.P. Assembly, 1937-40, of Constituent Assembly of India, 1946-50, and of Lok Sabha, 1952-57.

3. He wondered how *The Pioneer* divulged the news that Jawaharlal was not inclined to attend the provincial youth conference.

4. Jawaharlal had taken exception to the notice of the youth conference mentioning him as a prominent invitee without obtaining his consent. He also disapproved of the use of militant phraseology by the kisan sabha workers in *Sangram*, the Hindi newspaper.

know. It is my practice always to write personal letters to my colleagues if I have to bring anything to their notice or to seek an explanation. This often results in the removal of misunderstandings. I quite agree with you that such things should not find their way to the press.

You will remember that the other publication that you complain of, namely the letter from Sri Prakasa, was given publicity by someone in Benares. This was improper, but surely I am not responsible for it.

Regarding your invitation to visit Unao for a conference next week, I am afraid it is quite impossible for me to go anywhere or to attend any conference.<sup>5</sup> The kind of problems I have to face are overwhelming, and apart from the difficulty in finding time, my mind rebels against the idea of attending conferences at present. It is possible that I may have to rush off to Bihar to attend a meeting of the constitution committee.<sup>6</sup>

For many months past, I have been trying my utmost to avoid attending conferences because I wanted to concentrate on other work. I have only attended very special gatherings like the provincial conference or the States People's Conference.

For some years past I have only gone out of my way to attend conferences or meetings organised under Congress auspices. If I had been present at a city where some other conference like a kisan conference or youth conference was taking place, I attended it for a short while. But I have not undertaken a journey during the last three years to attend any non-Congress conference of this kind. As Congress President, I laid down this policy for myself, and I have tried to stick to it since then.

Regarding the youth conference at Unao, I would not have thought of attending it because of the reasons given above. The fact that my name was previously given is another reason that I should not attend it. Thirdly, the manner and text of the notice seemed to me wrong and it became difficult for me to associate myself with a conference of this kind. All this of course has nothing to do with you.

You are perfectly right in saying that as President of the P.C.C., it is my business to stand by my colleagues and to see that nothing is said or done which affects their prestige. You will find that I have not done anything of this kind and the publication that you complain of has nothing to do with me. I regret it as much as you do. Certainly I

5. He requested Jawaharlal to attend the provincial youth league conference to be held at Unao from 13 to 15 May 1939.

6. The Haripura Congress had appointed a committee to consider certain organisational changes in the Congress and frame rules, if necessary, subject to the approval of the A.I.C.C.



shall try my best that such things are not published. As far as I remember, it was not any letter of mine that was published after Tripuri but Sri Prakasa's letter.<sup>7</sup>

You are wrong in thinking that anything you said at Ayodhya displeased me in the sense you mean.<sup>8</sup> Certainly I did not agree with something that you said, though I forget for the moment what it was. It is easy for me to criticise you or for you to criticise me, because we all of us have faults. It is true, however, that I have been distressed for some time past at the way our difficult problems have been faced by some of our colleagues. This does not refer to you particularly and there is nothing personal in it. So far as I am concerned, I have always followed the practice of referring to the persons concerned any kind of complaint that I might hear or have.

I do not see at all why you should think in terms of resignation from the P.C.C. council. There is no question of suspicion or distrust. The only questions that arise are sometimes of disagreement on questions of work or policy. We have to put up with this anyhow.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

7. He complained that publication of Jawaharlal's letter regarding Tripuri affairs, drafted in a vague manner, created a false impression in the public mind.
8. He felt that Jawaharlal was displeased with him because he had expressed certain views at the subjects committee meeting at the Ayodhya conference of the U.P.P.C.C.

### 30. To P. Subbarayan<sup>1</sup>

Lucknow  
May 13, 1939

My dear Subbarayan,  
Thank you for your letter<sup>2</sup> of the 6th May and for the photograph that you have sent.

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. He regretted that Jawaharlal had not joined the Working Committee and complimented him for trying to effect a compromise at the Calcutta session of the A.I.C.C.

I am quite sure that it was right for me to keep out of the Working Committee as it was formed. I am sorry events took the shape they did in Calcutta. I think it was quite easy to have avoided a totally unnecessary conflict.

I am afraid there is no chance of my going down south this year.

Yours,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

### **31. On the Formation of the Forward Bloc<sup>1</sup>**

I do not approve of the formation of the Forward Bloc.<sup>2</sup> I, therefore, do not attach much importance to it. Although I would like to allow certain latitude to the people who hold different views to form their own organisation, I consider it improper to weaken the great organisation like the Congress by the formation of separate groups. In any active organisation, there would be differences of opinion, but these differences must not be confused with personalities. Such a course would not be in the interests of the country.

There is an awakening among the Muslim masses but they do not understand the problems of the country and are misdirected by the Muslim League.

1. Speech at Kanpur, 21 May 1939. From *National Herald*, 23 May 1939.

2. The Bloc was founded by Subhas Bose to consolidate the leftists, secure a majority within the Congress, and resume the struggle for independence in the name of the Congress.



## 32. The A.I.C.C. and After<sup>1</sup>

Friends and colleagues ask me many questions about the recent developments in the Congress, about the A.I.C.C. meeting, the formation of the Forward Bloc, and the happenings in Rajkot. In courtesy to them I discuss these matters, and sometimes to old friends and comrades I give a glimpse of my troubled mind. But their questions are seldom answered as they should be, and I am unable to unravel the tangle that is presented to me. I fear I give little satisfaction to them and yet that is not surprising, for I give even less satisfaction to myself. It is not out of this stuff that leadership comes, and the sooner my colleagues realise this the better for them and me. The mind functions efficiently enough, the intellect is trained to carry on through habit, but the springs that give life and vitality to that functioning seem to dry up. And so I hesitate to write on these subjects and the idea of public speaking is increasingly distasteful to me.

Perhaps a slight lowering of the usual standard of health has reduced vitality, perhaps the heat of the season is partly responsible. But the trouble lies deeper in the inner recesses of the mind and the spirit, or even in the sub-conscious which is said ultimately to mould us.

The tragedy of Spain and much that has happened in the West has been a personal sorrow to me, leaving a deep and lasting impress. But Spain is far, and the problems of India fill my mind and distress me. It is not external difficulty that troubles, but the whole background of India with its conflicts and disruptive forces, its pettiness and mutual suspicion. There is no faith in us today of each other, and every foolish statement and wild charge is believed. Vulgarly, that most distressful symptom, creeps into our public life, in the Congress and even more outside it. Policies and programmes and high principles have their importance; they are vital and urgent. But behind them all lies the human material without which these principles and policies can have little meaning.

Tripuri was a painful experience in many ways, and many of us returned from it heavy at heart. The subsequent press controversy and the fierce personal attacks that accompanied it, filled me with sorrow. I

1. Lucknow, 24 May 1939. *National Herald*, 27-28 May 1939. Reprinted in *The Unity of India*, (London, 1941), pp. 160-167

felt helpless to check these developments, being out of tune with the participants on either side. At the A.I.C.C. meeting in Calcutta I had hoped that we would end this wrangling, and go down to straight work. I laboured for this to the best of my ability, but without success.

In Calcutta I did not agree with all the suggestions that Subhas Babu had put forward, but I was convinced that he was earnestly striving for a united functioning of the Congress, accepting the Tripuri decisions. I saw no reason why there should be any difficulty in bringing this about, but opposition, which seemed to me wholly unjustified, came and led to his resignation. Perhaps that resignation was inevitable under the circumstances, and yet I regretted it deeply, for it led to a deepening of the fissures that separated individuals and groups in the Congress. I regretted even more the absence of a spirit of accommodation during the A.I.C.C. meeting in Calcutta.

Under these circumstances I could not join the new Working Committee. I had long been out of tune with the old Committee, but I had continued membership of it as I believed that the larger interest required it. With the new developments in Calcutta my place was outside, though not in any spirit of opposition or noncooperation. Such cooperation as I could give was always at Rajen Babu's disposal, and I appreciated greatly the courage with which he had agreed to shoulder the heavy burden and to face a disagreeable task.

But it is idle to ignore the differences that exist and tend to grow. Those differences are partly ideological and even more so temperamental, with a strong background of mutual suspicion. The Congress presidential election in January last was no vote of no-confidence against anyone or any policy, for no such issue had been framed or put before the voters. But it was a clear indication of dissatisfaction with things as they were and a desire to mend them. It had a lesson for all of us. That lesson has unfortunately not been learnt.

This refusal to learn and understand, this inability to adapt oneself to a growing situation, leads to resentment in the minds of many. There is a sense of frustration and suppression, which is the parent of suspicion and conflict. I have myself had this feeling of frustration and I can well understand others, less favourably situated, reacting in like manner and to a greater degree. I can appreciate the desire to end or lessen this sense of frustration by an effort to bring together those who, broadly speaking, think alike and are desirous of functioning together and thus get rid of the feeling of individual helplessness which tends to overwhelm them.

But we may not, simply because we are driven by a sense of resentment, take a step which weakens us and leads to worse consequences.



The world is in a sad mess today, tragic to those who are sensitive, heart-breaking to those who feel. We assure ourselves that we are living during an age of transition and that the sorrows of today are but the birth-pangs of the new order. It may be so, or perhaps our wishes are fathers to our thoughts. Meanwhile we go through this agony, almost unendurable at times, and there is little hope of comfort in the future that we can see. Everywhere there is a cracking up, a dissolution of things as they are, but the building up of a new structure is not so evident. Ruling classes and groups, who have dominated affairs for so long, exhibit their utter incompetence and grow increasingly ineffective and incapable of dealing with the problems of today. And yet no other group or class appears strong enough or competent enough to take the reins of affairs in its hands. History has few examples of sheer ineptitude and failure such as Mr. Neville Chamberlain and the British Government have exhibited; but Mr. Chamberlain and his government continue for lack of others to take their place.

The world situation affects us, but even more so internal conditions point the same way. It is not outside the bounds of possibility that fascist elements, with apparently anti-imperialist slogans, may gain strength and power in our country and even in our national organisation. There is sometimes a cry that the Congress High Command is adopting fascist methods. The High Command, as it is called, may have erred often enough, and it has certainly acted sometimes in an authoritarian way. But to suggest that it tends towards fascist methods, is to exhibit ignorance. There is a good deal of fascism in the country today and a little of it even inside the Congress. It flourishes chiefly under communal colours and in some so-called non-political organisations. But the old leadership of the Congress, whatever its other failings, is far removed from it. Curiously enough, among the loudest of its critics are the fascist elements in the Congress.

## II

Subhas Babu's step in forming a Forward Bloc is an understandable corollary to what has happened, yet it is not necessarily a desirable one, for there are obvious dangers involved in it. It is, so far as is known at present, a negative grouping, an anti-bloc, whose sole binding cement is dislike of, or opposition to, the individuals or groups that control the Congress today. There is no positive policy based on definite principles, except a desire to ginger them up generally. There is no restriction which might keep out elements which, politically or otherwise, are undesirable. The doors of the Bloc are wide open, and it is evident enough that a very miscellaneous company are likely to find shelter in it. We

have had, and have, plenty of trouble in the Congress itself with the adventurist and opportunist elements that have crept in. Long tradition and the inherent strength of the organisation keep them in check to some extent, and we are now thinking of devising rules to control them still further.

But in a new organisation or grouping without this tradition and checks and without any clear principles and ideology, such adventurist and opportunist elements will find full play, and might even, under cover of fine phrases, play a dominating role in it. It is quite possible that fascist and communal elements might also enter its folds and seek to exploit it to further their animus against the Congress and its anti-fascist policy. How will Subhas Babu deal with this situation when it arises? We must remember that fascism grew in Europe under cover of radical slogans and popular phrases.

It will be easy for fascism to function under cover of our nationalism, and yet to give a wrong and dangerous bent to it. Already we are told that nationalism is in essence racialism, and therefore we must lay stress on the idea of our race and a hostility to other races. That has not been the nationalism under which we have grown up. Take another aspect of the question. Our war resistance policy is of vital importance to us. It has been adopted because of our love of freedom and democracy and our insistence on Indian independence. Now that very policy might be given a twist and made to fit in with fascist desires.

The fascist powers would very much like India to be a thorn in the side of England when war comes, so that they might profit by the situation we create. There is nothing that we would dislike so much as to play into the hands of the fascist powers, just as we dislike being exploited by imperialist Britain. Our anti-war policy must therefore be based on freedom and democracy and opposition to fascism and imperialism. And yet with a little twist it might well be turned into a pro-fascist policy.

These are some of the dangers of the Forward Bloc. It is a little difficult to consider it positively as no clear indication of its policy is available. The only attempt to clothe the Bloc with a garment of a definite policy, so far as I know, has been made by Shri M.N. Roy in a series of able speeches and articles.<sup>3</sup> Do his views represent the policy

3. For instance, M.N. Roy said on 24 May 1939: "If the Bloc is only an *ad hoc* organisation with the purpose of catching some more seats in an A.I.C.C. meeting, I think that would be simply an opportunist fight for some leading positions without effective power of operation..." He hoped that the Bloc "may become an instrument for the mobilisation of the leftists in the Congress and the present vagueness of its policy may disappear in course of that process."



of the Bloc, or do they, at any rate, influence this policy considerably? Their views, whether one agrees with them or not, represent a certain definite outlook and programme which is clearly at variance with anything we have done so far and which means a complete break with the past.<sup>4</sup> I do not agree with this general outlook and approach, and I think that it is utterly out of touch with reality in India today. It is of course at variance with the Tripuri resolution which calls for no break in general policy. It does not fit in with what Subhas Babu has said about his own approach to the present-day problems.

It is not my purpose to discuss the merits of Shri M.N. Roy's proposals here. The point is that they constitute a complete challenge to much that the Congress has stood for these many years and, if accepted, must mean a break-up of the Congress as we know it. That may or may not be desirable, but at any rate let us know what the implications are. I want many changes in the Congress, but I think that they should grow organically from our past work and should not involve too much of a break. We must recognise and appreciate the great value of what has already been done and build on those foundations. Any attempt to act otherwise will certainly lead to complete disruption of our movement for freedom and the probable ascendancy of reactionary elements. Conditions in India are plain enough for us to learn from them. The recent history of Europe has a lesson for us which we cannot ignore.

There is one other aspect of the matter. The attempt to form a Forward Bloc or any such grouping inevitably results in the consolidation of other groups opposed to it. That, of course, is no reason why a group should not be formed, but it is a reason for it to be formed only at the proper time and in the proper way. Otherwise the immediate result is to strengthen the opposing groups, and to bring about a bitter conflict within the organisation for control of various communities. Such conflicts have to be faced in a democratic organisation, but it would be unfortunate if we became wrapped up in them on the eve of internal and external crises.

These are some of my difficulties in regard to the Forward Bloc. But whichever way I look I find difficulty. The recent developments in Rajkot have an obvious importance and they are certain to have far-reaching repercussions not only in the states but in all India. How far'

4. At the Serampore political conference on 19 May 1939, Bose declared that "the main programme of the Bloc would be to consolidate all the left forces in the country and to organise a volunteer corps throughout British India and Indian states as well as to prepare the country for the impending fight against British imperialism."

do they represent a change in Gandhiji's approach to political problems, how far will they affect the policy of the Congress which he dominates? Gandhiji may be right in what he has done in Rajkot; without more and detailed knowledge I am not entitled to express an opinion. But the various processes he has gone through during the past few months in connection with Rajkot are exceedingly difficult to understand or appreciate, and I do not see how a political movement can be guided in this way. When I had the honour of being elected president of the All India States People's Conference, I knew well that I could not work any wonders or do anything out of the ordinary. The whole question of the states is a vast and complicated one, varying in form and substance in different areas, and yet having an underlying unity. I hoped, however, to be able to do something to coordinate these various movements and activities and to give them a common background. But I realised soon that any activity of mine might not be in tune with what Gandhiji was doing in regard to the states. I had no desire to say or do anything which might come into conflict with him, as this would produce confusion in the states. And so I remained quiet and more or less inactive. I felt disabled.

That sense of helplessness increases after the Rajkot events. I cannot function where I do not understand, and I do not understand at all the logic of what has taken place. This applies to the wider plane of all-India politics also.

I have had a considerable measure of belief in Gandhiji's vision and instinctive reaction to events. I have welcomed the moral tone he has given to our public life. His vital and prodigious contribution to our struggle for freedom is an essential part of India's history. I think that he has yet to play a greater part in our struggle and in fashioning our future. I hope that it will be India's good fortune to have him for many years.

But more and more the choice before many of us becomes difficult, and this is no question of right or left or even of political decisions. The choice is of unthinking acceptance of decisions which sometimes contradict each other and have no logical sequence, or opposition, or inaction. Not one of these three courses is easily commendable. To accept unthinkingly what one cannot appreciate or willingly agree to produces ultimately mental flabbiness and paralysis. No great movement can be carried on on this basis; certainly not a democratic movement. Opposition is difficult when it weakens us and helps the adversary. Inaction produces frustration and all manner of complexes, and is hardly conceivable when from every side comes the call for action.

That is the problem before many of us.



33. On Ziauddin Ahmad's Insinuations<sup>1</sup>

Sir,

In your issue dated 26th May there appears a letter under the caption 'Mr. Subhas Chandra Bose and Dr. Khare' from Dr. Ziauddin Ahmad<sup>2</sup> of Aligarh. This letter contains so many remarkable and fantastic statements that I hesitate to believe that it has been written by the redoubtable and learned vice-chancellor of Aligarh University. I shall not deal with these various statements and insinuations but, as there is a reference to me in it, I am venturing to presume on your courtesy by writing these few lines. Dr. Ziauddin Ahmad says in the course of his letter: "It is now a well-known secret that Mr. Jawaharlal Nehru has been offered and has accepted the premiership of India in the new federation". I would not have cared to notice or contradict such an astonishingly false and foolish statement if some irresponsible person had made it, but I cannot remain silent when Dr. Ziauddin Ahmad makes it. I shall be glad to know from Dr. Ziauddin Ahmad what justification he has for saying something which, to use moderate and restrained language, can only be called a mischievous lie. Dr. Ziauddin Ahmad's conception of public life may be that of the market place, of buying and selling, of trading in honour and truth and principle, but may I beg of him to confine that conception to those from whom he has derived it, and not to extend it to others whom he does not know?

Jawaharlal Nehru

1. Letter to the editor, *The Leader*, Allahabad, 27 May 1939. *The Leader*, 28 May 1939.
2. (1878-1947); member of the Central Legislative Assembly, 1930-47; associated with the Muslim League; vice-chancellor, Aligarh Muslim University, 1935-47.

### 34. A Dangerous Proposal<sup>1</sup>

The statement by the Congress President in the press today has, for the first time, drawn my attention to a proposal made on behalf of the Left Consolidation Committee to observe next Sunday, July 9, as an all-India day for the purpose of demonstrations against certain decisions of the A.I.C.C.<sup>2</sup> This proposal raises such fundamental and novel issues for the Congress that it would have been eminently desirable for the council of the U.P.P.C.C. to have considered it and pronounced their opinion on it. Unfortunately, the council ended their sittings last night, and it is not possible for members to meet again without due notice. As the matter is urgent and is likely to have far-reaching consequences, I am issuing this statement in my capacity as the president of the U.P.P.C.C. for the guidance of the Congressmen in these provinces.

The question before us is not whether we approve or disapprove of certain resolutions passed by the A.I.C.C. The question is whether Congress committees and Congressmen generally should organise demonstrations on an all-India scale or on a smaller scale against the decisions of the A.I.C.C. The question is whether members of the A.I.C.C. should revolt in action against the resolutions of the A.I.C.C., whether members of the Congress executives in provinces and districts should demonstrate publicly against the supreme executive of the Congress, whose decisions they are bound, under the constitution, to carry out.

I am not aware of such a proposal having been made at any time previously in the history of the Congress. I can only presume that those who are responsible for it have agreed to it in the excitement of the moment and without thinking of the past or the future. At any time it would have been a dangerous proposition, which carried within it powerful elements of disruption and disintegration. To put it forward today, with the world hanging over the brink of a crisis, is to be guilty of a most amazing short-sightedness.

Truly, many of us have lost sight of the wood for the trees, and we can only function in narrow grooves of party and can think of little else

1. Statement to the press, Lucknow, 7 July 1939. *The Hindustan Times*, 8 July 1939.
2. The Congress President warned the Congress committees and the office-bearers against participating in the demonstrations called by the Left Consolidation Committee to protest against the two A.I.C.C. resolutions. See also p. 352.



but of factions within our own ranks. That is not the nationalism that I have learnt; nor is it the socialism of which I have been and am proud. Is this the way to a united front, of which so much is talked, or a continuation of the struggle of the masses? It is a challenge to the Congress organisation which we have built up with so much love and labour and sacrifice, and it can only lead to disruption if persisted in. Our anti-imperialist fight will recede into the background, our mass struggles will convert themselves into internecine and factional conflicts and thus we shall prepare for the crisis ahead and for enforcing the national demand.

Of course, many people who are said to be of the right have acted wrongly often enough, and in a narrow spirit of faction. They have attempted to hold back or suppress advanced elements in our ranks. It may be that the resolutions objected to might be utilised for this purpose. But the action suggested gives the final justification for these resolutions and weakens the argument. If there is an open revolt in the Congress, then it is time to stop further disruption. The two resolutions of the A.I.C.C. that have been criticized are logical enough as they read, and any organisation which thinks in terms of united and coordinated action might well adopt them. But it is equally true that they might be used for party purposes, and therein lies the danger. Because of this it was my intention, if I had got a chance at the A.I.C.C. meeting, to speak against the resolution relating to satyagraha.

But the question now is not of the merits of the resolutions, but of the very basic discipline of the Congress and of our allegiance to its constitution. We break that discipline and throw off that allegiance at our peril. I cannot congratulate the Left Consolidation Committee on their first appearance in public in the shape of their statement. This augurs ill for their future.

### 35. On the Defiance of the A.I.C.C. Resolution<sup>1</sup>

I have expressed myself in my statement that the action of the Left Consolidation Committee is partly based on a misconception of the A.I.C.C. resolution. There is such a lot of talk of ban on direct action.

1. Statement to the press, Bombay, 13 July 1939. *The Hindu*, 13 July 1939.

The A.I.C.C. resolution does not say any such thing. On the other hand, it gives power to the provincial Congress committees to choose their own course of action.

The Bengal Provincial Committee has lodged a protest against a resolution which gives power to it to decide its own course of action.<sup>2</sup> It is absurd to protest against the grant of such power.

I think a difference should be made between primary Congress members and office-bearers, because the latter are constitutionally bound to carry out the decisions of the A.I.C.C. Primary members have much greater latitude. And even executive members may have some latitude in regard to individual criticism, but it certainly does not include latitude to launch a mass attack on the A.I.C.C.

Such an open revolt must disrupt and weaken the Congress if it succeeds. It seems to me that many people who took part in the demonstrations on July 9 did not realise its implications. Many workers in the districts in my province asked me what the A.I.C.C. resolution was. The resolution has to be explained to people very clearly. It is not clear how the same person in one capacity can carry out and in another capacity attack it. Matters have come to a head in this way. It seems to me that it is difficult to ignore this defiance of the Congress by the left members. But at the same time it appears to me that the question of taking disciplinary action against them might be premature at this stage. The first thing to do is to remove misapprehensions so that the issue may become clear. If a provincial Congress committee can challenge and defy an A.I.C.C. resolution, then a district committee or a city committee can equally defy the provincial committee's decisions.

The result in the end would be disruption, which no organisation can tolerate. But it is not for me to lay down what should be done. Whatever the views I might possess on this subject that would be forestalling and perhaps embarrassing the Working Committee or the A.I.C.C.

To four members of the Allahabad district committee, who participated in the demonstrations on the 9th instant, I asked them, as president of the provincial Congress committee, to tender resignations of their posts, and carry on their agitation against the A.I.C.C. in their capacity as primary members.

I totally disapprove of Mr. Subhas Bose's action in carrying on a campaign against the A.I.C.C. while holding the presidentship of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee. I would have had no grievance

2. On 9 July 1939, the executive council of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee passed a resolution deploring the two resolutions passed at the Bombay meeting of the A.I.C.C. on 26 June 1939.



against Mr. Bose had he resigned the Bengal presidentship and then carried on his agitation.

My personal view is that the full provincial committee and not the executive alone must meet first and consider the resolution passed on the 9th instant by the executive committee under Mr. Bose's lead. It should be remembered that the executive committee in Bengal had been nominated by the president. The full provincial committee might have views quite different from those of the executive and the president.

I do not agree with Mr. Bose that the Congress President's view of the requirements of discipline interfere with the basic principles and traditions of democracy. Democracy does not mean licence for one to do anything he likes. The Congress is a democratic body with a certain definite creed and objective. It cannot allow its members to carry on an agitation which injures the cause of the furtherance of its creed.

I must also regret Mr. Bose's criticism of the Bombay Government's prohibition programme.<sup>3</sup> His statement on the eve of the launching of the programme seems to be undesirable and unhappy.

3. The Congress government in Bombay decided to prohibit the sale of liquor and other intoxicants in the city of Bombay and its suburbs from 1 August 1939. Expressing his doubts about the workability of the scheme, Subhas Bose said, on 11 June 1939, that it might adversely affect business and industry and encourage illicit production and sales.

### 36. Demonstrations against the A.I.C.C. Decision<sup>1</sup>

So far, stress has been laid by socialists and others on what is called a joint front. If that is really the objective of the Consolidation Committee, then the step they took on the 9th July is entirely unintelligible. The only explanation is that it was done unthinkingly and without realising the consequences, as that step leads inevitably to conflict and disruption in which event there will be no possibility of a joint front. If, on the other hand, the desire is to change the Congress leadership at the top completely, and regardless of the consequences, then the step was a right one, although it might not bring about that result.

1. Interview to the press, Bombay, 13 July 1939. *The Hindu*, 14 July 1939.

Looking at it from the point of view of the leftists' policy, the course that the Consolidation Committee attempted to pursue seems to me a fatal one. That can certainly weaken the other elements in the Congress and injure the organisation as a whole. But the greatest injury will be to the cause that this committee seeks to represent. It is a boomerang which will come back to them. Technicalities apart, the question is whether the time has come to change completely the present leadership of the Congress at any cost. I doubt the wisdom of this attempt.

### 37. Dissensions Will Weaken the Congress<sup>1</sup>

The Indian National Congress is a great democratic institution. It must function democratically; the will of the majority must prevail and the minority, though it might not like the decisions arrived at, must bow to them, unless, of course, there is a very vital matter involving a great principle and forcing it to go out of the Congress. During the last six or seven months there has been, within the Congress, a growing tendency of dissension and a spirit of hostility and distrust. If these are allowed to grow, the Congress cannot function efficiently. They will weaken the Congress at a time when we need most of our strength, and when we seem to be on the verge of a world crisis. At such a time as this, it is a criminal folly to allow fissiparous tendencies to grow and weaken the influence of the Congress.

As I sat here looking at the vast multitude, my mind went back to two years and a half when I had come to this very beach and addressed a similar multitude. The memories of the events that took place during this period passed in rapid succession through my mind. I had addressed several meetings all over India, and more especially during the four or five months before the general elections, and had in my own way established a record in the number of meetings I addressed. I had spoken to millions of people of what I had in my mind. But what had been far more important to me was that I tried to understand through those millions whom I addressed what India was. We think of India and talk about her and we also sing *Bande Mataram* and raise slogans like *Bharat Mata ki Jai*, and yet I wonder how many of us have

1. Speech at Madras, 25 July 1939. From *The Hindu*, 26 July 1939.



really thought what exactly the conception of *Bharat Mata* is. In my wanderings, on seeing millions of faces, I have had a vague glimpse of what India is. I felt India's diversity was tremendous, and yet behind it lay an equally tremendous unity. The more I sought to understand her and the more, perhaps, I succeeded in doing so, the more I understood that she was unfathomable. She was too big to be understood. When I passed through fields in rural areas, and saw men and women working in the fields, I was often surprised to find that even in our degradation and poverty, we had produced such fine types of men and women. Wherever I went, I found a powerful urge rising up in India to go ahead, to get rid of the chains that had held her in bondage, and to make her worthy of what she should be.

I have also tried to understand India from outside her borders, because if we really want to know what India is, we have to see her from outside. The people of India had in the past gone farther away from her. It is only in the decadent days of the present that we have got all manner of restrictions. Indians in the past carried on trade outside India. They also spread Indian culture and civilisation in distant lands and built famous structures which are perhaps better specimens of the old Indian architecture and culture than any building we may now find in our country. I am telling you all this so as to give you a proper perspective, as it is necessary to do so for understanding the nation's problems. Today no problem can be isolated and treated separately. Every national problem is linked with international problems. If we look at the world today, it appears to be a jig-saw puzzle, and it may be that some minor happenings in some distant land may upset the equilibrium of the world. For getting a complete view of the picture, we cannot look merely at a part of it.

I am giving this background partly because I want that the picture should be seen against this background, and partly because I like talking about these matters to young men. I must, however, apologise to young men and women for not being able to address them separately. I would have liked to do so because whatever might be done by the present generation, the burden of tomorrow will fall on those who are young today and it is they who will carry on India's struggle and try to solve her problems.

It therefore becomes necessary for us to see things in their proper context now that we have arrived at the present stage in our struggle for independence. We have become, in spite of the fact that we are a subject country, a powerful country in many ways, though not powerful enough, still a strong and consciously powerful nation. In the world, outside India, we count for a great deal today. India has

gone up in the estimation of the outside world not because we have now a number of provincial governments controlled by the Congress. That itself has been the outcome of so many other factors. It might also be the result of the power we possess. We in India, at present, are very much in the thick of the battle, and that battle must continue. There can be no compromise between Indian nationalism and British imperialism. The only way in which these two can combine is by one becoming a complete subject of the other. We have always to keep this in mind and for this reason have to keep alive a spirit of fight.

Like an individual, a powerful nation would also look very foolish in the eyes of the world if it did not develop dignity and self-control. During the last nineteen years of struggle, the people of this country have developed a great deal of strength. That may not have been reflected in our achievements, but we possess that strength and would wield it in a proper manner when the time comes. We have also developed a measure of dignity and self-control, and I am sure that we will not behave in a petty manner before the bar of world opinion. If we have to put up a fight to save our honour, if there is no other course left open except through a conflict, we shall do so. But we would not act like urchins throwing stones in the streets. We have a powerful organisation and must keep its spirit alive. The militant spirit reflected in us reveals the strength that we have acquired. While we ought to keep up the agitational spirit, we also need develop a dignified outlook which would raise India in the estimation of the world. These two things must be coordinated.

There are so many problems facing us. We all have to face them. There is the problem of Ceylon and connected with it is the problem of the Indians overseas. I do not consider Ceylon as a foreign country at all. In fact, it is practically joined up with India. Any person who looks at the map can realise that it is not conceivable in any scheme of things, political or even economic, for India and Ceylon to be cut away from each other. They cannot be; certainly Ceylon cannot be. So far as we are concerned, it is one of the many problems; but for Ceylon it is a great problem. If the two countries are isolated, it would mean a great misfortune to Ceylon. There is no reason why they should be separated.

When I returned this morning from Ceylon, the press reporters asked me questions not only about this particular problem but also about many other problems. They asked me about the betrayal of China by Mr. Chamberlain and many other questions. They asked me questions about the growing indiscipline in the Congress, about the communal issue and other problems. They asked me about the movement



in Hyderabad and about the Indian states. About the Indian states, I have expressed my views frequently. I hold strong views about them. I hold that they have no place at all in India. The sooner they are liquidated the better. I would like to talk about all the problems but I have no time. I can speak on any one of the problems for hours. But my object today is to tell you how to look at these problems. Today we are faced with the grave danger of wasting our energy. We now possess sufficient strength to gain independence, to face British imperialism and face it successfully. But a weakness comes in, the weakness that is within the body politic. Today we are wasting our energy in mutual conflicts. There may be differences of opinion—and I do not say that there should not be any differences of opinion; they are a sign of growth—but these conflicts cannot be carried too far. In our petty conflicts, we forget the real problem. We forget the whole background.

I have received many letters criticising me and accusing me that I have done this or that I have not done that. I have endeavoured to understand the problems in the light of the background which I have given. During the last six or seven months, there has appeared within the Congress a growing spirit of dissension, a growing spirit of hostility and a tendency to hurl accusations at each other. In a big organisation there may be cleavages; there may be differences in outlook. We do not want a purely autocratic type of organisation. That is not the type of organisation that I would like the Indian National Congress to be. We want healthy criticism, and I have myself indulged in a fair amount of criticism of my colleagues. But I find that behind the criticisms levelled against the Congress and its activities, there lies a deep feeling of distrust and hostility.

If within the Congress there are such deep feelings of distrust and hostility that Congressmen should side with its enemies and turn against its friends, then obviously the Congress organisation cannot go very far and cannot function very satisfactorily because all our efforts would be lost in mutual conflict. Even if we have that feeling of hostility and distrust among us, there are certain standards of behaviour which we can forget at our peril. People do not usually go about shouting what they have in their minds about their friends and acquaintances. If we work together in an organisation, we have to put up with the vagaries of our colleagues. There are few men in the Congress about whom we cannot make a balance-sheet of evil and good. I can easily make a long balance-sheet about myself. But what irritates me most is that attention is more and more diverted to that kind of internecine warfare and criticism. This should not be allowed to go very far. Of course, it would not put an end to the Congress because the

Congress is too powerful an organisation to be ended. But it would make us ineffective for the time being, and weaken us at a time when most of our strength is needed, and when we seem to be so close to a world crisis.

This does not mean that we must put up with what is contrary to our principles and deviate from the path that we have laid down for ourselves. Obviously, it does not mean that. Too often some of us in the name of the highest principles act wrongly and break up what we have built after so many years of hard labour. I think that all of us should think about these problems fully, and not be swept away by some slogans. It is not unlikely that we may have to face some dangerous problems if we allow ourselves to be swept away by slogans as has happened in some countries. I believe nobody wants fascism to grow in this country. We remember how it grew up in Germany or in Italy. In Italy, Signor Mussolini was a great socialist in his day. With the aid of socialist slogans, he attained power over the multitude. Having attained that power to some extent, he gained power in the state and then he used that power to crush the old colleagues or friends of his in the socialist ranks, and established a completely authoritarian state where socialism or anything like it is not tolerated. Similarly, Herr Hitler in Germany has used big slogans which are pleasing to the masses. He got into power on the strength of socialist slogans more or less. As soon as he got into power, the first thing he did was to crush everything in the nature of socialism, communism and liberalism. It is, therefore, very dangerous for us to go after slogans merely. A slogan is a good thing because it makes us think in a pointed way about certain ideas. But it is a dangerous thing if it is used for wrong purposes. What I find today in India is that good and powerful slogans are sometimes used in a vague and indefinite way for entirely wrong purposes. That is a dangerous trend, and I wish you to know from the examples of Italy and Germany that if we are not careful and vigilant, we might be led astray, not only in the sense of weakening the great organisation we have built up, but also in a more dangerous and vital way, in turning the life of the country in a direction opposed to what I consider a democratic, socialistic and freedom-loving frame of mind.

I do not want people to accept in a static way what is happening, whether it is done by a ministry or a Congress committee or by anybody else. I am not at all happy about the Congress ministries. I am not at all happy about the conditions that exist in the country today or about the problems that have cropped up as a sequel to the



assumption of office by the Congress. I have said it before and I want to say it again that when the discussion about office acceptance took place, I was entirely opposed to it. But when the Congress accepted it, in spite of what I thought of it, I accepted the Congress decision, and all of us did our utmost to make it a success. Then later on when I reviewed the balance-sheet, what struck me most was that it was inevitable that we should have accepted office under the conditions existing then as also for various other reasons about which I need not talk here. Acceptance of office has undoubtedly done us a great deal of good. We have achieved much by way of mass awakening, and ministers have gained experience in dealing with numerous problems of administration. It is a training for the nation in the establishment of an equilibrium between the agitational and militant side of our organisation and the self-control that is necessary for the good of the country. This is on the credit side. There is also the debit side. We got wrapped up in small problems and forgot bigger ones, and thus we became more and more entangled in petty matters. Personally, I think the existing conditions cannot last very long, because, as I have said before, whether it is the situation in India or elsewhere, the want of equilibrium and the number of unsolved problems are dangerous portents.

Now let us face any question, whether it is one of the Congress ministries or of the Congress organisation, or any other question. Let us face it, and let us understand it and argue about it, and finally decide about it in a democratic way, and having come to a decision, let us abide by that decision. Any other way would lead us to an absolute chaos. Let all of us recognise that the Congress is a democratic organisation which must function in a democratic way, in which the will of the majority must prevail, and a minority, howsoever important it might be, should bow to that decision unless, of course, it involves a very vital matter of principle or conscience. Let us take, for instance, the question of satyagraha being offered by Congressmen. Any organisation must have a certain discipline in it. I am ready to admit that discipline has been enforced for wrong purposes on many occasions. We should try to stop it as far as we can. Nevertheless, we cannot for that reason say that there should be no discipline. Otherwise, the organisation will not remain. Therefore the Congress demands that we should not indulge in satyagraha without the permission of the provincial Congress committees. But even the strongest discipline has its limitations. Suppose I have to decide whether I should break a law or not. Obviously, I have to decide it for myself. I cannot refer the matter to the provincial Congress committee. I would take a decision and if that decision happens to be a right one in the view of the

provincial Congress committee, well and good. If not, I would suffer the consequences thereof. So it is in an army where the strictest discipline has to be maintained. If a commander wants to take a step which he thinks to be right, but which goes against discipline, he has to run the risk in doing so.

You and I have a right to rebel against anything, not only against the British Government, but even against the Congress, if we feel that the matter is vital enough and if a matter of conscience is involved. But we have to realise the consequences of our rebellion. We cannot then go about saying that we are rebelling in order to increase the strength of our organisation to fight imperialism.

Today when the world is wrapped up in war and empires fall and get disintegrated, what would happen to India? We should try our utmost to see that things happen as we wanted them to happen, so that India may not be a welter of chaos and anarchy. The whole world is moving in that direction. What force in India can prevent it? I want you to think about it. I can tell you that there is no force greater than the Congress that can prevent such a horror from happening. Therefore, if that is the situation, each one of us has to think hundreds and thousands of times before we do anything which would blunt the edge of this instrument, the Congress. We may have the best of intentions and may talk about principles. But we should be able to see if we are increasing the strength of the Congress or are doing something which would weaken it and divert our minds in the direction of internecine warfare. It might be that sometimes the Congress might take a wrong step. But a wrong step might be better than what appears sometimes from the high grounds of principles to be a right step. The latter might actually result in our breaking that great weapon which we have forged for our fight. What is the use of a right step if it leads to a greater wrong? Unfortunately, in this world, more especially in public affairs, it is a frightfully difficult thing to say that a thing is hundred per cent right or hundred per cent wrong. Things get overlapped. One problem is linked with another. A course of action one may suggest may be perfectly right and sensible. But if we think of a problem in relation to half a dozen other problems, it may be that that right course in regard to that one problem has very serious consequences in regard to several others, and thus produce bad results, and so, in the totality of circumstances, that right course might be a wrong one. It is in this light that we have to face national problems today. It is quite easy for us to fight a straight issue in a straight way. But the problems of our country that we have to consider overlap one another in every manner. Groups, individuals,



various interests, provinces, their people, the religions and communities, and what not, have to be considered. We cannot take up one problem forgetting the rest. Therefore if the All India Congress Committee or the Working Committee of the Congress take some decisions, we must realise that they have to consider various aspects of the problems before reaching those decisions.

We have thus arrived at a stage in our national life when we cannot think of one problem singly because we are a responsible people; we are responsible for the future of our movement, for the future of our struggle and for the future of India. Therefore we dare not forget that responsibility simply because in regard to one particular matter we feel that something ought to be done.

I had gone to Ceylon on a particular mission. The Ceylon Government has given notices of dismissal to a number of Indians employed by the government. The original notice of dismissal was for a little over 1,400 persons. Those employees were daily wage-earners. That did not mean that they were temporary employees. A person might be working in a factory all his life getting a daily wage, but he is as much entitled to security of tenure as a person who receives a salary. Many of these daily wage-earners have been in Ceylon for ten, fifteen and even a greater number of years. I did not ask the Ceylon Government not to give preference to the Ceylonese in the matter of employment. But the question is of dismissal of those who are already there. I would expect any government to have labour laws to prevent it. Then there is the scheme of voluntary repatriation affecting Indian daily wage-earners also. If a person takes advantage of the scheme, well and good. But here again a threat is attached that if they do not take advantage of it now, they are likely to be retrenched without any bonus next year. To me it is a question of the whole future of the Indian population. It is a question of the future relations between India and Ceylon. The people of Ceylon are just like the Indian people. I, therefore, feel aggrieved to find that any kind of conflict should arise between the two. So far as the immediate object of my mission is concerned, I have not achieved any great success. I am sorry for that. But I would say that I had had long and friendly talks with the ministers there, and the latter had been very friendly and courteous. Whether we appreciated each other's point of view or not, we have discussed the matters with a desire to overcome the difficulties. The Ceylon Government has the problem of unemployment to face. I have told them that I cannot have any grievance if they completely stop the recruitment of Indians in government service. They, on their part, said that cases of individual hardship would

be considered. Whether I have succeeded in the mission or not, my visit has resulted in increasing the goodwill between India and Ceylon. Although, superficially, some bitterness of feeling has been noticed among certain people there, still the Sinhalese people have feelings of friendship towards India, and they gave me a magnificent welcome wherever I went.

When I speak about this question, I am led to talk about the question of the emigration of labour. It is in the interests of our country, and particularly for the sake of our dignity and self-respect, that it should be stopped. I hope that here, in this province, you will face these problems in the spirit in which I have endeavoured to place them before you and will prepare yourselves to face the great crisis that is bound to come in the near future.

### **38. The Congress Is the Only Weapon<sup>1</sup>**

By twenty years' labour, we have evolved a strong weapon to fight our country's battles and its cause. That weapon is the Congress. That is our only effective weapon. We cannot afford to weaken or blunt that weapon.

I want to appeal to you to remember that the Congress alone is in a position to bring about and maintain unity. If we look back at the sad chapters in the history of our country, we will find that India never lacked valour and intellect, but disunity was her bane, and it is still undoing her.

Democracy without self-control and restraint turns into anarchy. Discipline is the very essence of democracy. I know that younger elements in the Congress are dissatisfied with so many things. So long as there are different heads, opinions are bound to differ. We might make criticisms, but once a decision is arrived at by the majority, that decision should be loyally abided by.

I want the leftists to remember that there are others who are neither leftists nor rightists. There are many patriotic people who are ready to serve the Congress and the country. Let them not gain an impression that leftists are merely destructive. There is a great need for continuing the dynamic, militant and agitational programme and policy of the Congress.

1. Speech at Poona, 26 July 1939. From *The Hindu*, 27 July 1939.



I want to refer to Subhas Chandra Bose's statement.<sup>2</sup> I really feel sorry that personal criticism should have been made. I must say that I did not call the Forward Bloc an opportunist or fascist organisation. All that I had said was that in the absence of a clear policy there was room for opportunist and fascist elements to creep into the Forward Bloc.

About my mission to Ceylon, I am of the opinion that the whole problem is mainly economic. I hope that both India and Ceylon would realise that they cannot do without the other, and that, in future, there would be more cordial relations between the two countries. I regret that I could not do more than what I did but I am glad to say that there is a definite change in the attitude of the Ceylon Government as a result of my visit.

2. On 25 July 1939, in a rejoinder to Jawaharlal's "unprovoked attack" on the Forward Bloc, Subhas Bose said: "I would ask Panditji in the first place wherein he finds opportunism or fascism in the programme of the Forward Bloc. I would ask him in the second place to tell us who among the members of the Forward Bloc are either opportunists or fascists.... I should rather label as opportunists those who would run with the hare and hunt with the hound—those who pose as leftists and act as rightists—those who talk in one way when they are inside a room and in quite a different way when they are outside.... Are those people to be called fascists who are fighting fascism within the Congress and without or should they be dubbed as fascists who support the present autocratic 'high command' either by openly joining the present homogeneous Working Committee or by secretly joining in their deliberations and drafting their resolutions.... The line of opportunism is always the line of least resistance.... But joining the Forward Bloc means courting trouble, difficulty and persecution when one could have an easy time."

### 39. On the Forward Bloc<sup>1</sup>

I am surprised to read Mr. Subhas Chandra Bose's comments on something that I am supposed to have said in Ceylon with regard to the Forward Bloc. I imagine that he has been misled by some incorrect report. I had no occasion to discuss the Forward Bloc or our internal politics while in Ceylon. Once, however, I met some members of the Sama Samaj Party which is a socialist organisation there, and spoke with them

1. Interview to the press, Poona, 26 July 1939. *The Hindu*, 27 July 1939.

informally about the developments in India. In the course of this conversation, I referred very briefly to the recent happenings and the formation of the Forward Bloc. I was considering this question from the socialist viewpoint. I said that though the Forward Bloc might contain some socialists, its policy had not been declared to be such. So far, it had declared that it would follow the existing policy of the Congress, except that it would ginger it up to make the Congress go faster. While this, I said, was generally desirable, there was the danger of a Bloc of this kind having no clear policy, of attracting opportunist and adventurist elements who were tied to no policy. I used the words in a technical sense, and of course I did not refer to any individual.

I further said that socialist slogans had been used in the past even by fascist organisations in the early stages. Unless, therefore, there was a clear ideology attached to the slogans and to the party, the danger of a drift towards a wrong course was always present.

I strongly deprecate personal criticisms and I have always tried to avoid them. In public life we must presume the *bona fides* of each other, unless facts and circumstances compel us, in the interests of the public good, to do otherwise. Whether I agree with the Forward Bloc or not is a matter of policy and not personal criticism. I trust that all our criticisms will be based on policy and not on personalities. I regret very greatly the tendency of some newspapers to indulge in personal criticisms of a very undesirable kind.

#### 40. Discipline in the Congress<sup>1</sup>

An unfortunate and difficult situation has arisen in the Congress organisation owing to the decision of the Left Coordination Committee to have all-India public demonstrations on a fixed day to protest against certain resolutions of the All India Congress Committee. I would have liked to place this matter before the council for their directions but unfortunately I knew nothing about it when the council met. It was only after the council had ended its session that I read the Congress President's statement and later the statement issued by the Left Coordination Committee. As the matter was urgent and important, I issued a statement in my capacity as president of the P.C.C.<sup>2</sup> I trust I reflected the views of the council in this statement.

1. Note circulated to the members of the executive council of the U.P.P.C.C., Lucknow, 31 July 1939. *National Herald*, 1 August 1939.

2. See pp. 582-583.



This statement was inevitably somewhat brief and the full problem could not be discussed in it. This problem affects the whole of India and the entire Congress organisation and the ultimate decision must therefore be an all-India one. But we in the U.P., while fully accepting and cooperating with the all-India decisions of the A.I.C.C. and the Working Committee, have always endeavoured to maintain our own discipline and to work in a corporate capacity. It is, therefore, desirable for us to consider this matter ourselves and come to certain decisions. Unless any unforeseen developments take place, we can do so when the council meets next early in August.

As there has been some slight misapprehension about the statement I issued to the press, I should like to clear it. I think the primary members of the Congress have and should have every right to criticise and object to Congress decisions, whether these decisions are of the plenary sessions or the A.I.C.C. or the Working Committee or the P.C.C. The only restricting factor in their case is article one of the Congress, as well as the general rule that they must not carry on activities which are anti-national and anti-Congress and which discredit the Congress. This general rule is no doubt vague and has to be applied to each individual case after a full consideration of the surrounding circumstances. We have applied it, for instance, in the case of those Congressmen who have opposed official Congress candidates in elections. The general rule should not apply to ideological differences and their expression or criticism based on them.

The difficulty arises when members of executive committees, who as such are responsible for carrying out the directions and resolutions of superior committees, carry on an agitation against these resolutions. A deadlock then arises which cannot easily be solved constitutionally. The question we have to consider, therefore, is how far members of various executive committees can participate in agitations against resolutions of superior committees or their own committees.

So far as I am concerned, I think a measure of latitude, to express ideological differences, should be allowed even to such members of executives. But where action is concerned, it is another matter. We cannot have an executive pulling in two or more different directions in regard to action. Nor can we have members of the same executive denouncing the action resolved upon by that executive. No executive can function in this way.

The celebration of an all-India day to denounce or protest against resolutions of the A.I.C.C. is action of an intensive kind. Inevitably it brings the A.I.C.C. into disrepute among the public. Let us consider another aspect of this case. Suppose the U.P.P.C.C. passed a certain

resolution. Would it be justifiable for district, city or *mandal* committees or their office-bearers to organise a provincial agitation against it? Suppose the council of the P.C.C. passed certain resolutions. Could members of our subordinate committees refuse to carry them out and organise a widespread agitation against them? It would be right for individual Congressmen to protest and to bring the matter before the P.C.C. whose decision should be final, so far as we are concerned.

The real question is : are Congress committees bodies of action or merely deliberative or advisory assemblies? If they are meant to be the former, then it follows that action must be uniform, pointed and as swift as possible. It follows that all members of executives should give their adherence and energy to it. It is impossible for an organisation to be a body of action and at the same time to have part of its executive opposing that action.

It seems to me that some Congressmen have an idea that generally speaking (apart from special occasions such as civil disobedience on a large scale) the Congress should be a deliberative and advisory body leaving action to other organisations. This would lead inevitably to the Congress ceasing to have the power to act even on special occasions.

There is no reason why other organisations should not act of their own accord. Whenever possible, they can have the sympathy and help of the Congress organisation. But where such action comes in the way of Congress action or disables the Congress, then it would be absurd for Congressmen, more specially members of Congress executives, to encourage it. Each person then has to decide which is the more important from the larger point of view of our struggle. If local action is held by him to be essential he should support it, but he cannot at the same time hold an executive office in the Congress.

Obviously, there are conflicts inherent in the situation and it is not an easy matter to resolve them. We want the strength and prestige of the Congress to grow as most of us feel that there is no other way of achieving our objective. We want to help local struggles of the masses where they are rightly conducted and for right objectives. We have to coordinate these two in so far as we can. In our own province we have had some success in this task and there is no essential conflict among us. But we know that sometimes irresponsible individuals have started a local struggle on entirely wrong lines and have injured the cause of the masses thereby. We have to control them.

So far as we are concerned in this province, the resolutions of the A.I.C.C. hardly affect us as we can well look after ourselves. It is indeed rather strange that we should protest against a resolution which



gives a certain power and authority to the P.C.C. Are we afraid of our own P.C.C. or our council misusing that power? If so, we should change the P.C.C. or the council.

But the question is a wider one and other provinces may have their own peculiar difficulties and problems. In any event it has suddenly come to the forefront and cannot be evaded as the whole future of the Congress organisation is affected by it. What the Working Committee or the A.I.C.C. may do in this matter I do not know. But we in the U.P. should be clear about it. I suggest therefore that this matter be fully considered at the next meeting of the council. This note will be sent to all members of the council and I invite them to send to the P.C.C. office their views in writing on the subject touched upon in this note. I am also having a copy of this note sent to all members of the A.I.C.C. from the U.P. but they need not trouble to reply, unless they especially wish to do so.

#### 41. To Sri Prakasa<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
August 15, 1939

My dear Prakasa,

I have just received your letter of August 14th. You will remember that I gave expression to my views pretty fully at the provincial Congress committee meeting on this subject. While I agree with much that you said then, I did feel that the context in which we had to consider all such matters had changed and we could not ignore this. I think that Subhas Bose has acted very wrongly and done considerable injury to the cause and more specially to what might be called the left. It is perfectly true that the people on the other side have in the past and in the present acted wrongly also. What I am concerned with is not so much the judgment of individuals as the effect of a particular action on our movement. Unfortunately, we are becoming more and more involved in the consequences of past actions and errors. It is the law of *Karma*, I suppose, which we cannot escape. Or, call it the development of an inevitable Greek tragedy which cannot be stopped.

I confess that I feel very helpless in the middle of two rival groups both of whom seem to me in the wrong. By nature, I do not like

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

forming groups, and in any event, whatever happens, I want to retain a certain integrity of mind and dignity in action. This is difficult enough at any time, more specially in times of extreme crises. As you know, I am overwhelmed with this sense of impending catastrophe. I find that few persons even among our leading politicians have this sense of tension and this premonition of approaching disaster. I fear we are rapidly heading for what might be called civil war in the real sense of the word in India. Our future conflicts are never going to be on the straight issue of Indian nationalism *versus* British imperialism. British imperialism in future is certainly going to play an important part in opposing us. But it will do so more from behind the scenes exploiting all manner of other groups to this end. We talk and argue and debate about relatively small matters with this impending fate reserved for us. Anything that weakens us from this point of view seems to me disastrous. I am therefore forced to consider all developments in this context. I realise that it is not good enough to analyse and criticise from a distance. One must do something much more. But so long as the path is not perfectly clear, I hesitate to do so in this ever-changing situation. It is something at least to avoid a wrong step although one may not take the right one.

It seems to me that owing to the changes in the world situation the whole background and foreground of Indian politics like all other politics have undergone a certain change. I am afraid our old leadership is almost entirely ignorant of this change. But even our advanced elements have not grasped very much and continue to talk in terms of yesterday. Subhas Bose with all his emphasis on leftism talks a language which is peculiarly out of date. His ideal is De Valera. Quite apart from the great difference between Ireland and India, I do not think much of De Valera as an ideal. There is also a certain crudity about Subhas which is distressing. It is hardly possible to discuss any matter with him in private or in committee. He only listens and gives you the impression that he agrees with what you say and then does something entirely different. I think he is going in a wrong direction completely, and many of his immediate advisers are entirely unreliable. He is becoming a symbol for many people who are bitterly hostile to the Congress and for what it stands. They are exploiting him to this end.

All that I have written about has little to do with the contents of your letter. But I wanted to put before you something that I had in mind, and I wanted you to appreciate how grave the issues are today, and how everything that we do brings consequences in its train of a most serious nature. It is not good our comparing events today with events that took place during a static period.



I was present at the Working Committee meeting when this matter came up. My main function was to discuss Ceylon and the international situation. I felt a little hesitant in interfering otherwise in the proceedings, on many matters, with the members. When Subhas's matter came up I informed the Committee of the U.P. council's decision.<sup>2</sup> I further told them of your proposal which though not passed appeared to have the goodwill of most of our members. The Committee considered many things some of which are not before you and which indicated the serious consequences that are flowing from certain actions. Their task was not made easier by the persistent defiance which Subhas Bose showed. Nevertheless, I felt sure in my mind that no serious disciplinary action should have been taken.<sup>3</sup> My own idea was that he should resign from the presidentship of the B.P.C.C. Nothing more was necessary. However, after long discussion, the Working Committee decided as they have done. As I have mentioned above, I did not like, as a non-member, to take too aggressive a part in their deliberations or decisions. I placed my viewpoint and that was as much as I cared to do.

I think that the Working Committee's decision has been very unfortunate and it will harm us. But I do not see where decency and morality come in. The whole attitude adopted by Subhas was not in consonance with either of these qualities and it becomes very difficult for an organisation to be tolerant of deliberate defiance specially at a moment when that defiance is being exploited by others for their own ends.

In any event I do not quite see how the action suggested by you for yourself follows from the Working Committee's decision.<sup>4</sup> It is no good acting on the spur of the moment in a matter of grave importance. I hope you will reconsider your position.

2. It said: "The Council...desires to make it clear that office-bearers and all members of executive committees of the Congress should not participate in any demonstrations against the resolutions or the declared policy of the Congress, the All India Congress Committee, the Working Committee, the provincial Congress committees and this Council, nor should they indulge in any activity which might lower any of these committees, or this organisation itself, in public esteem."

3. On 11 August 1939, the Congress Working Committee disqualified Bose from the presidentship of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee and debarred him from membership of any elective Congress committee for three years from August 1939 owing to his show of "grave indiscipline".

4. Sri Prakasa proposed to resign from the Congress, but was persuaded by Mahatma Gandhi not to do so.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Narendra Deva who will be functioning as president of the U.P.P.C.C. soon. I am sending your original letter to Gandhiji so that he might know how you and some others feel in the matter. Perhaps he might write to you directly.

I hope to leave for China on the 20th August if war in Europe does not break out meanwhile.

Yours affectionately,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

## 42. Enough of It<sup>1</sup>

I owe an apology and an explanation for leaving India when so many urgent tasks demand attention. I do not usually play truant. For a long time I have felt strongly that closer contacts should be developed between India and China, and it was a joy for me when the Congress medical unit went to China. Still I felt that I might be of service in developing these contacts, and I toyed with the idea of going there. There was the international situation which might lead to war at any moment; there was the internal situation which was progressively deteriorating. I gave up all thought of leaving the country. But the idea stuck at the back of my mind and I could not get rid of it. I argued with myself that these crises will continue; there is no end to them in our present-day world. I might as well take advantage of a seeming lull. The journey was a short one by air and my absence need not be for long. I was not foolish enough to imagine that I could solve our many riddles by remaining here.

I mentioned my vague thoughts to some friends and immediately entanglement grew. Letters and cables and invitations poured in upon me from China, and I struggled in vain. I surrendered, possibly because I wanted to surrender and felt that I could be of more service to the cause of India by visiting China. After I had decided to go, other developments took place which made me regret my decision. But it was not easy to withdraw at that stage.

1. Lucknow, 18 August 1939, *National Herald*, 19 August 1939. Reprinted in *The Unity of India*, (London, 1941), pp. 168-171.



Yet I am not sorry that I am going. I must confess that recent happenings in India have disturbed me greatly. I am not for the moment referring to our internal conflicts within the Congress, important and far-reaching as they are, but to something that has a deeper significance. I have felt that many of us have not fully appreciated them in our absorption with matters of lesser moment. To the small extent I could, I tried to prevent the rift in the Congress from widening because of the urgency of our facing other problems together. This endeavour of mine pleased nobody, or hardly anybody, and displeased many. Perhaps I was wrong.

It is perfectly true that I have felt puzzled and perplexed. This perplexity is not due to any doubt in my own mind as to what should be done, but rather to the difficulty of inducing any considerable numbers of others to act in a particular way. When organised groups and parties within the Congress function aggressively against each other, I feel singularly out of place, as I have not been used to such functioning. It invariably happens under these circumstances that each group tries to overreach the other, and the immediate and all-important objective seems to be to triumph over the other group. The larger good is often forgotten. Politics, seldom pleasant, become singularly unpleasant then.

I fear I am an ineffective politician at any time, and I have no taste whatever for the variety of politics that has lately developed. That is my weakness. When I cannot act effectively, I try at any rate to preserve a certain integrity of mind, and I wait for the time when I can act more effectively. It is a cheerless task.

Yet none of us dare be onlookers when vital tasks demand attention. I have no intention of being an onlooker.

Before I go I should like to draw the particular attention of my comrades in the United Provinces to the situation which is growing here, as well as in other provinces. Because of our policy and deliberately not wishing to interfere, we have ourselves allowed this to grow. But it is time we called a halt to it.

This situation, at present in its very early stages, is full of undesirable possibilities. Various groups are deliberately trying to foment public disorder by violence and methods of terrorism. It is easy for a handful of persons to do so when large numbers of others passively permit them. And so the handful grows in temerity and repeats its performance, and another handful takes its cue from it. The great majority of people suffer from this and cannot carry on their ordinary vocations or activities.

It is perhaps a little unfair to single out organisations for criticism, for every organisation has good men and bad. But there is no unfairness

in saying that the communal organisations are chiefly responsible for this state of affairs. This is common knowledge and, indeed, they take pride in it.

It is obvious that if this kind of thing is allowed to continue it may lead to complete public insecurity and to armed or unarmed bands terrorizing the neighbourhood. No civilised people can tolerate this. This is not a matter merely for the Congress or the government. Every man or woman of goodwill and good sense must be interested in putting this public hooliganism down. No public or decent private life is possible if bands of roughs or hooligans dominate the scene.

It was time that it was made perfectly clear that this can be tolerated no longer. A government may give a long rope but no government can put up with hooliganism or else it is not worthy of that name. Riots are detestable and have to be prevented, but even occasional riots, bad as they are, are to be preferred to continuing acts of public terrorism and hooliganism.

But for the present I am addressing Congressmen in this province. I have little doubt that the Congress organisation, if it functions properly, can remedy much that happens. Our methods must not and cannot be violent in the slightest. It is not through our violence that we are going to check the violence of others. We function peacefully but none the less effectively. We must tighten up our organisation, and, more particularly, we must pay attention to our volunteers. Every Congress committee must have its trained volunteer corps. Our volunteers are not meant for show or to impress the ignorant with their bright new uniforms. Nor are they meant to interfere in any person's legitimate activity. They are the soldiers of the nation pledged to peaceful methods and service. They should have simple uniforms, of course, to distinguish them and give them a corporate sense. They must be disciplined and trained.

I call upon every Congress committee—district, city, town, *mandal* and *halqa*—in the province to devote itself with all earnestness to the formation of volunteer corps. The provincial office will give all the help it can. But work must be started without waiting for further directions. On my return from China six weeks later I hope to visit some parts of the U.P. and inspect these volunteers.

We have had enough of weak pandering to evil tendencies. Enough of it, and more than enough. A halt must be called. Let us pull ourselves together and set about this business in a business-like way.



## GENERAL





## THE QUESTION OF LANGUAGE

### 1. A Common Language for India<sup>1</sup>

It is a pleasure to me to come here. We who are submerged in the hectic world of politics know what the peace of a place like this might mean. Not for peace alone, but also for the hope she holds out to younger generations, is Santiniketan's place significant in our country. I remember how Gandhiji expressed genuine surprise when, some ten or twelve days ago, an eminent foreigner very naively told him that Santiniketan was not included in his itinerary. It was because Gandhiji knows, and we all know, that no other institution in India embodies so intimately the hopes and aspirations and ideals which we hold dear to ourselves. And from this point of view Santiniketan represents an essential aspect of our country.

Urdu and Hindi are like the two streams flowing from one parent source; their framework and structure are the very same. Provided we do not attempt to widen the breach, we will—whether we call our language Urdu or Hindi—be laying the foundation of a common language, namely, Hindustani. Our academic or literary language may differ, but let there be a language for the common usage. For achieving this goal we need conforming, wherever and whenever possible, and that will be possible in an atmosphere of liberal give and take. I think, therefore, Santiniketan to be an eminently suitable place for helping in the evolution of a common language for India.

1. Speech while inaugurating the Hindi Bhawan at Santiniketan, 31 January 1939. From *The Hindustan Times*, 2 February 1939.

## 2. To Manzar Rizvi<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
March 4, 1939

My dear Manzar,<sup>2</sup>

Your letter. I wanted to send you a Hindustani message but it takes less time to dictate in English.

I have looked through the *Honehar*. Its general get-up and contents have attracted me. I think that all such efforts to write a simple and identical language in both the Urdu and Nagari characters are desirable. And I welcome this particular one. Opinions will no doubt differ as to what simple Hindustani is. Some will incline somewhat towards more difficult Hindi, some towards more difficult Urdu. I do not think this matters at all and the more efforts we have the better, even if we vary. The *Honehar* probably inclines a little towards Urdu. Nevertheless, its language is chaste and simple. I wish it success.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-31(K.W.1)/1939, p. 107, N.M.M.L.

2. Editor, *Honehar*, a monthly magazine published from Patna, in both Urdu and Dev Nagari scripts, for propagating the Hindustani language.





SODEPUR, APRIL 1939



AT A.I.C.C. SESSION, CALCUTTA, 29 APRIL 1939



## STUDENTS AND PUBLIC LIFE

**3. Students and the World Problem<sup>1</sup>**

Students of today will have to shoulder the burden of the world that will emerge out of the present international chaos. Will that world be one where freedom and democracy will flourish or will it be a slave world crushed and exploited by dominating fascism and imperialism?

The answer to this question will have to be given by all of us and no one can be more interested in that answer than those on whom this burden of the world will fall tomorrow.

It is right, therefore, that they should face these problems from today and throw their weight on the side of peace, freedom and democracy. These three go together, for there is or can be no peace except on a basis of freedom. We have arrived at a stage when there is a war between freedom and democracy on one side and fascism and imperialism on the other. Each one of us has to choose. Faced with this choice, the British and French Governments with their imperialist backgrounds and traditions and their desire to protect vested interests of those who profit by imperialistic exploitation, have inevitably lined themselves up with fascism. That process of siding with fascism will continue so long as the British and French people do not decide to shed their imperialism.

I trust the *World Students Association* will not hesitate in this hour of crisis to line itself up unhesitatingly on the side of freedom and progressive forces. To hesitate now is to prove oneself unworthy of the task that has been allotted to the coming generation.

1. Lucknow, 6 December 1938. This was written for the journal *World Students Association* published from Paris. *The Hindustan Times*, 7 December 1938.

#### 4. Discipline in National Life<sup>1</sup>

British imperialism is still one of the biggest and the most powerful imperialisms in the world. Nevertheless, from the long point of view of history, it is dead. Historically speaking, it has given up the ghost, though, in actuality, it may survive a number of years—ten years, twelve years, fifteen years—I do not know how many. But the point is that, historically speaking, it is dying. It has lost everything that gave it strength. It may carry on yet because of some impetus it has got, but it has lost the spirit to survive, it has lost the material resources that gave it strength, and, what is more, it has lost the spirit and the heart to survive.

I have not a shadow of doubt that British imperialism cannot keep us down today or prevent us from achieving independence. Today we are strong enough to face it provided certain inner weaknesses do not come in our way, so the problem then becomes for us, in order to remove all traces of imperialism, to remove those weaknesses that come in our way, our own weaknesses, the disruptive and the communal tendencies which weaken us, and such other drawbacks.

There has been in the past one year or two, or perhaps more, a great deal of ferment in the student world in India. That ferment is due to many justifiable causes in many instances. This has often led to strikes and the like. Although I appreciate that there might be occasions when students might take action with regard to them, I have completely failed to understand the extreme facility with which the students have gone on strikes in schools and colleges. I am not aware of students striking anywhere else outside India except on very, very particular occasions, like participating in big national movements. Of course, conditions in India are peculiar, and peculiar conditions require peculiar remedies. Still, I have felt very strongly that students in India are pursuing a wrong path and getting entangled in wrong methods by their too frequent recourse to strikes.

There is no economic conflict or any other conflict between the interests of the teachers and the students. It may be that there are undesirable teachers. But there is no fundamental conflict between the functions of the two. Now the whole idea of education is based on the cooperation of the teacher and the taught; otherwise there cannot be any education. Therefore this impulse to go on a strike, except for

1. Speech at the All India Students Conference, Calcutta, 2 January 1939. From *The Hindu*, 3 January 1939.



very grave reasons, is highly undesirable because I feel this would ultimately lead to the disintegration of the student movement.

Very often, nowadays, people resort to fasting in order to gain certain objectives. I consider such action to be childish.

My advice to the students is to combat sectarian and communal tendencies. The All India Muslim League and the All India Hindu Mahasabha are both communal organisations. If we read through the resolutions that have been adopted by both we will find that the arguments and the methods of approach adopted by both the organisations are remarkably similar.

I have no desire to use strong language when criticising these organisations. But I do wish to express my utter distress at the methods the communal leaders are introducing in our public life, which inevitably are resulting in the deterioration of the whole tone of public life. There are certain standards that we have to follow in public life. And if we leave those standards, we do so at our peril. Let us assume that the Congress is hopelessly wrong, or, for the matter of that, any other organisation is wrong. But right or wrong, if we are to continue our public life with any measure of sobriety and responsibility, we have to observe certain standards of decency, and I regret to say that progressively those standards are disappearing from our communal organisations.

I have no doubt that the time will come when this bitterness will go and a large number of people, who are very decent people, but who, on account of passions, prejudices and other reasons, are in the communal organisations today, will realise where they are going and will gradually come round.

I cannot think of anything more absurd than to talk of a Muslim students federation or a Hindu students federation, just as it is equally absurd to have a Muslim workers union and a Hindu workers union in a factory. That is absurd.

The resolutions adopted by the Congress in its earlier years of development were more strongly worded than those which are being passed now by the Congress. This is but natural and it shows the strength that the Congress has acquired now. Today there is greater purposefulness shown by the Congress resolutions as they have an effect on large sections of people. The outside world also knows that when the Congress passes a resolution, it has behind it the threat of action. It behoves us then to make the resolutions look simple and dignified.

The membership of the Congress in recent years has increased tremendously. The Congress should be careful about the type of men it enlists as members. I suggest a stiffening of the Congress membership rules so that it might have, as a majority of its members, people who

would be ready to fight and make the Congress a fighting organisation. Are we all sure that the large numbers of men who have enrolled themselves as Congress members are really capable of putting up a fight? The problem before the Congress today is how to fuse together the political and social movements. Are these members able to face this problem?

During my recent tour of Europe, I gained enough first-hand knowledge and experience of the conditions prevailing there. I doubt if full significance of what has happened in Europe during the last few months has been properly understood in this country. During these few months several very strange events have taken place in Europe. Those events are as important from the historical point of view as the Great War of 1914-18. The last war was important historically, not from the point of view of casualties or destruction of lives, but from the point of view of the changes that it brought about in Europe.

These events have entirely changed the map of Europe, and, what is more, it is continually changing. And further, I found an extreme paralysis of the intellect in countries like England and France, which still presume to call themselves democratic. An extreme paralysis of intellect seems to have afflicted all the people, be they young or old; people belonging to all manner of highly advanced groups, and less advanced groups, as well as the Conservatives. There is a strange paralysis of the intellect among these people. They appear to be overwhelmed with too many problems and do not appear to find a solution for them. They have, with the rest of the world, the problem of democracy to solve.

In the nineteenth century democracy was only on the political plane. Now it is being increasingly realised that democracy will cease to function unless it is extended to the economic plane. Democracy, in particular, is an institution which requires a certain tradition behind it, a certain habit, and a certain discipline. A democracy without discipline goes to pieces. And this discipline must come from within, not as an imposition from outside.

The Congress today has outlived the days of shouting and vigorous denunciation of British imperialism. Now that it is on the threshold of power and responsibility, not only our countrymen, but also the world at large, expect us to follow up our decisions on any issue by suitable action. That explains why the resolutions of the Congress are progressively becoming milder and more dignified in their wording. But the milder wording of our resolutions must not be taken to indicate any weakness in the position of the Congress. Rather it conveys to all those, whom it may concern, the impression of a strong determination to carry on our decisions to the bitter end, if need be.



## 5. The Cultivation of a Scientific Outlook<sup>1</sup>

Culture is one of those words which might mean anything, including culture in everything, in history, in society and in every form of human activity.

Certain people in this country, for instance, condemn education in India as a manifestation of British imperialism. I suppose there is nobody in India who is not aware of the fact that the present system of education is bad, and that the basis on which it stands is doubly bad. Attempts are, however, being continually made to change and improve it.

The Wardha scheme of education seems to me a remarkable attempt at improvement of education on modern lines. I am of the opinion that any system of education that might be introduced in this country should integrate the activities of both the mind and the body of the students.

What exactly do you mean by culture? Individual culture, social and national developments and everything akin to them. Development also takes two forms generally. There is the development of individuals which is highly important, and as individuals develop they form social groups. Naturally the more well-developed the individuals, the higher the social groups which we shall have. On the other hand, when we develop a social group, it helps the development of individuals, because one reacts upon the other. So we have to see that both developments take place simultaneously.

Ordinarily, the religious approach in the past has been the way of individual development. It tries to improve the individual hoping that the improvement of the individual will affect the social group. That has been so in every country whatever religion it may have had or whatever method may have been devised for approaching the problem.

Nevertheless, the modern method lays stress on improving the environment so that a person living in a particular environment may grow to his fullest capacity. Both these methods have not been, however, contemporary. Perhaps the stress laid on the improvement of a particular environment is more important today because if the environment is bad you cannot make much progress. We have to think again in

1. Address at the cultural conference organised by the students of the Scottish Church College, Calcutta, 3 January 1939. From *National Herald*, 7 January 1939.

terms of social culture and what kind of environment it develops. What is the good, for instance, of your trying to cultivate unselfishness and noble qualities when the social structure that surrounds you is based on selfishness and produces bad influences on life?

Look at the world today, the international world. It is quite astoundingly immoral and bad. How can you expect influences to be highly moral when continuous pressure of immorality is put on environments, with the result that there has inevitably occurred an all-round deterioration. The deterioration has taken place on the international level, the national level and the individual level.

Today there is a great feeling of paralysis of mind among a large number of thinking individuals in Europe, in America and all over the world. It is so because they feel that the forces of evil are stronger than their combined strength. The forces of evil are indicated by fascism and reaction, and this environment forces them to be far from good.

How to find a way out of this situation? It is not enough for you to imagine that the problem is so simple that by a few slogans you will be able to solve it. Every form of government or state, whether it is fascist, imperialist or communist, indulges inevitably in creating an environment which helps its maintenance. It inevitably tries to spread its influence on the minds of its citizens through educational process.

You have, therefore, ultimately to decide what form of state or society you are going to have. Saying that you dislike imperialism is to make a negative statement. We have to be positive as to what type of 'ism' we want. It depends on certain fundamental axioms of thought and freedom of various kinds of activities. Because various complex situations influence the society as well as the individual, we cannot possibly help develop the conditions we desire.

We must, therefore, have freedom of thought. We must have a democratic process working as far as it can. But, at the same time, we must not forget that the freedom of thought leads to some difficulties. Ordinarily, it does not lead to difficulties because people who avail of the freedom of thought and action are sufficiently disciplined. They are advanced in their thinking and are responsible in outlook.

Today in many countries of the world the democratic process seems to work slow. It does not bring in results quickly when quick results are necessary. We, therefore, find that in this century democracy has not functioned well even in those countries where it has been in existence for many years. When confronted with these difficulties we try to find an answer by resorting to pet phrases which do not really help. They only divert our attention to other channels of thought.



Today mankind is passing through unprecedented changes and a period of transition. We must remember that we are going through the most extraordinary period in history. It has been an astoundingly revolutionary period of changes. From my knowledge of history, I doubt if there has hitherto been any time which was fraught with such revolutionary changes as the period which began in 1914 with the commencement of the Great War and which continues till today.

It is not a question of one year or two. This crisis of change is bound to remain with us for a long time to come.

You hear nowadays a great deal about planning, specially in industrial and economic life; but what is more important is the planning of various activities of life that the nation undertakes so that each activity fits in well with the other. Yet, the approach to the problems must be our own.

In India today there is a conflict going on between two kinds of forces and problems. It is more or less a psychological conflict. There are obviously other conflicts such as political, economic and others. But there is also a psychological conflict, a conflict of minds. Many forces are pulling us in different directions. Many forces of the past have strengthened us. Many others have proved a burden also.

Now look at the various complex forces that have resulted in developing a more or less composite culture in this country. Every culture is equally a composite culture because no culture is purely a national culture in the sense that it has had no influence from other quarters. Of course, there is such a phenomenon as national culture which has a certain influence on the nation, but, generally speaking, even this culture has had a great deal of influence from other quarters, although India is one of those countries which has had an essentially composite culture for thousands of years. Our country has possessed a great capacity for absorbing foreign cultures that invaded this country.

Ultimately, India had to face what we call a new culture from the West which had as its basis science and modern industry which upset for the time being the whole fabric. During the last one hundred years or so, there has been a conflict in India between various types of cultures. There has been a conflict between the Western culture and our own culture. I do not mean to say that there is essentially a conflict between the two in public; but still there is an inherent conflict. If the culture of the West had not come to us in the guise of political conquerors there would not have been any conflict.

Just as in other cases we would have taken it much more readily, we must distinguish it from this political conquest because science as such

has nothing to do with political conquest. It is something which represents the spirit of the age. There cannot be any doubt that we cannot progress nationally or individually unless we profit by the lessons of science.

There is, however, a problem before us when we think of science. We have to think presumably not of science as applied in the fields of industry or politics but science in its wider connotation. What is science? It is a certain way of approaching problems, a certain way of seeking the truth. It is a certain empirical way whereby we get prepared to reject anything if we cannot establish or prove it.

Of course, some of the most established rules of science are often being upset. Newton's theory of gravitation has undergone a change by Einstein's theory.

What I wish to emphasise is that science means an approach to all of life's problems. It is to be applied to the problems relating to our family, religion and everything else. You cannot apply science in your industries keeping other departments of your life free from it. The whole scheme is unscientific. Therefore, if we want to consider various problems that face us as an individual and as a social group, the right way to consider these problems is to adopt the method of science. If we examine our social and economic systems, we will find that these have developed in a most irrational manner. If on one side there is an abundance of production, we find that on the other side there is terrible misery and want.

The League of Nations proclaims peace and cooperation but the very members of the League are preparing for war and indulging in wars of aggression. They are the people destroying foodstuffs so that the prices of those foodstuffs might be kept up for profit.<sup>2</sup> If we want to solve all these problems, we have to approach them in a scientific and rational way, with a proper objective before us. That kind of approach alone can help us to understand and solve the problems.

I am a socialist because I feel that socialism is a scientific approach to the world's problems. It is not necessary that I should agree with every other socialist but generally a socialist approach is scientific and that appeals to me tremendously. It helps me in understanding the problems of history and history itself. If I try to look at history from

2. In mid-thirties, farmers in the United States of America were granted subsidies for producing less. In 1936, nearly thirty per cent of the total produce of coffee was destroyed, and in England, a quarter of the capacities of the Lancashire mills or ten million cotton spindles were destroyed.



a socialist point of view, it helps me to understand the present position because the present has its roots in the past.

Therefore I would like you to consider the various cultural and other problems and apply the scientific approach to your personal life, especially because you are apt to give up this approach in your personal life. When you adopt the scientific approach, you will find a conflict between the personal ideals and the ideals of our public life. This conflict will not, of course, make you happy in your life. But the real joy in life is to work for a great purpose, to understand it, and put all the strength and energy of the integrated mind and personality into its fulfilment. Such an endeavour will give you a sense of fulfilment and real joy.

## ON INDIANS ABROAD

**6. On Conditions of Indians Abroad<sup>1</sup>**

I find it somewhat difficult to send a message to my countrymen in South Africa. And yet it is easy enough to pen a message and feel virtuous at a duty performed. But it is not messages that our people abroad want; they want something more. There seems to be a dead-set at Indians overseas, more especially in the British dominions and colonies. In the Belgian Congo, Indian merchants are being harassed and crushed;<sup>2</sup> in the Italian colonies, Indians are gradually being squeezed out. In Mauritius, where our countrymen form a great part of the population, they have no position; in Jamaica, a recent report told us of their helpless and miserable condition.<sup>3</sup> Our own cousins in Burma and Ceylon have turned against them and are pursuing an ill-conceived and narrow-minded policy which is sowing the seeds of bitterness between them and India. In East Africa a fresh insult has been hurled at us.<sup>4</sup> And now in the Union of South Africa the pledged word of the Union Government has been deliberately broken and an attempt is being made to segregate Indians. Political rights had been denied us for long; now even human rights are being withheld.

This is the empire to which we have the misfortune to be tied. The sooner this empire ends, the better for humanity; the sooner we cut away from it, the better for us.

1. Message to the Natal Indian Congress, Bombay, 5 June 1939. *The Hindustan Times*, 6 June 1939.
2. Many Indian traders were prosecuted on false allegations of theft, refused legal defence and expelled from the Belgian Congo.
3. A memorandum to the Royal Commission on the West Indies had stressed the need for providing adequate facilities of housing, land settlement, education and employment to the Indians settled there.
4. The Kenya Highlands Order-in-Council, passed by the British Government in early 1939, caused great resentment among Indians as it gave sanction to the administrative practice which excluded Indians from buying or occupying lands.



India is weak today and cannot do much for her children abroad, but she does not forget them, and every insult to them is humiliation and sorrow for her. And a day will come when her long arm will shelter and protect them and her strength will compel justice for them. Even today in her weakness the will of her people cannot be ultimately ignored.

To our countrymen in South Africa, I say that we are with you in every act of courage that you perform in honour of India and her dear name. It is never right to submit to evil and national humiliation, and every attempt to impose these must be resisted, whatever the consequences. Dead nations submit to dishonour, but we are a living and a proud people and I would rather say that we faced extinction than submitted to dishonour.

## 7. To V.K. Krishna Menon<sup>1</sup>

Bombay  
June 11, 1939

My dear Krishna,

Some days ago a number of people came to see me about the plight of Indians in the Belgian Congo. I asked them to send their papers on to you and they tell me that they have done so. I do not know what you can do in the matter. But perhaps it might be possible for you to draw attention to this through Parliament or otherwise. These people have already been in touch with Polak who apparently represents the Indians Overseas Association. I do not know what Polak has done. The Government of India has also been moved in the matter.

I have been in Bombay now for the last nine days, all my time being devoted to the National Planning Committee. This is a hard and exhausting business, more so because of the various conflicting elements in the committee. I cannot leave the committee even for a day because in my absence the committee would not function. The subject is a vast one, still I think that some good will come out of our labours....

Yours affectionately,  
Jawaharlal

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L. Extracts.

**8. To R. Bhamani<sup>1</sup>**

Bombay  
June 17, 1939

Dear Friend,<sup>2</sup>

I have your letter of the 13th June. I have read the cutting that you have sent me with some surprise. The editor of the *Tanganyika Opinion* has presumed to sit in judgment over the Congress and its labours here in regard to our internal politics.<sup>3</sup> I am afraid this kind of presumption is not going to help the cause of Indians abroad. I find it peculiarly irritating to have people overseas passing airy opinions about difficult problems in India without knowing anything about them.

However, I should like to do what I can in this matter. I do not think that an Indian deputation can be sent from here under existing conditions, nor do I think that a boycott of Belgian goods is feasible. You will no doubt realise that we are facing similar and indeed much worse conditions in South Africa and Ceylon, not to mention the Indian states.

I hope the Working Committee will take the matter in hand and I shall gladly support them.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. Representative, Indian Association, Belgian Congo.

3. The paper, in its issue of 16 May 1939, while criticising the Government of India for its apathy towards the fate of Indian settlers in the Belgian Congo, also criticised the Congress for being too busy with its internal problems to take a firm stand on the position of Indians in the Congo.



## PERSONAL

9. To Indira Nehru<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad

12.4.39

Darling,

So you have gone and I wonder when and where we shall meet again in this mad world. More and more I have been thinking that it was right for you to go to Europe. India is not a happy country at present at any rate for those who are sensitive. Your companionship with me could give you little satisfaction for I am functioning most unsatisfactorily. There is no reason why you should have to put up with the consequences of my actions. It is well therefore that you have gone. Europe is bad, terribly bad, and yet it is for us impersonally bad. But in India the personal factor comes in.

I spent yesterday with Shah, Mahmud and company. Shah left in the evening and then I sat till late at night with Mahmud. Old ties hold when one is depressed. After Mahmud left me long after midnight I sat down to look through the proofs of *Glimpses* which had just come. I read those old letters which I had sent you again and I felt how terribly far away that time was, when I wrote them.

Agatha came today and will stay till tomorrow evening.

Have a good time on board and profit by the sea air.

Love,

Your loving  
Papu

1. Indira Gandhi Papers, N.M.M.L.

## 10. To Indira Nehru<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
13.4.39

Darling,

I have got a new malady—a toothache. Nothing much but troublesome. Since yesterday I have been nursing it. I expect it will go in a day or two. Mahmud has stayed on, probably not liking to leave me alone. Agatha is staying on for two or three days more till Nan returns to Lucknow.

I listen to the radio news and weigh the chances of war. I still think that it will not come off just yet but one never knows what will happen and it is best to be prepared. Perhaps even before you reach Marseilles the blow-up might take place. I am not afraid of the physical danger to you. That has to be faced anyhow. But the more I think of it, the more I feel that it will not be worthwhile for you to remain in England for long during war-time. You need not hurry away. If you go to America you can stay there some time. But we can see to this later.

I am writing to Louise.<sup>2</sup> But I think you had better send her a telegram from Marseilles.

Do you know these lines of Alfred de Musset?<sup>3</sup>

*J'ai perdu ma force et ma vie,  
Et mes amis et ma gaieté;  
J'ai perdu jusqu'à la fierté,  
Qui faisait croire à mon génie.*<sup>4</sup>

That is rather how I feel. But I will get over this.

Love,

Your loving  
Papu

1. Indira Gandhi Papers, N.M.M.L.

2. Louise Morin (1883-1970); a French journalist and a friend of India; made this country her home; in charge of the French unit of the All India Radio, 1952-65.

3. (1810-1857); a French dramatist and poet.

4. I have lost my strength and my life  
And my friends and my cheerfulness;  
I have lost even my pride  
Which used to make me believe in my genius.



11. To Indira Nehru<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
22.4.39

Darling Indu,

I suppose you are round about Port Said now and will soon enter the Mediterranean with all its battleships and submarines nosing about. I have tried to follow in my mind's eye your journey across the seas and sought relief from my growing burdens in thoughts that take me far away. These burdens grow and take all the spring out of life—not that I have too much spring left. It is five weeks or more since Tripuri and we are where we were. In another week we foregather in Calcutta for the A.I.C.C. and what will happen there nobody knows.

Two days ago I went to see Subhas at his request. We had a long friendly talk and yet from time to time I had a sensation that he was not fully aware of what I was driving at. This lack of awareness and sensitiveness of some people is terrible.

The communal situation is as bad as ever, though there are no riots—the Shias and Sunnis are going for each other. Pantji wants me to be chairman of a committee to consider the communal trouble and suggest a way out—a bad and difficult job.

Then in Jamshedpur there is a lot of trouble between the Tatas and their workers. I am asked to be one of the arbitrators. I do not know how to get out of it.

Meanwhile the P.C.C. and the *National Herald* drain all the energy out of me. I am going to Lucknow tonight.

I enclose a copy of a letter I am sending to Miss Darbyshire.<sup>2</sup>

I have received your L.B.C. book—*Empire or Democracy* by Leonard Barnes. I am keeping it.

Love,

Papu

1. Indira Gandhi Papers, N.M.M.L.

2. Helen Darbyshire, principal, Somerville College, Oxford.

## 12. To Indira Nehru<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
26.4.39

Darling,

I have come to Allahabad for a few hours and am just going to Calcutta for the A.I.C.C. Upadhyaya has already gone off with my luggage to the station and I am hurriedly scribbling these few lines.

Your letter from Port Tawfeik came today. I am glad you have had a fairly good voyage. Now you must be in Paris. I hope you have looked up our old friend Shah.<sup>2</sup>

You give me a lot of good advice, my dear, to keep smiling, etc. Of course. But it is a little difficult. I suppose age is telling upon me and I am losing my resilience. I enclose a very sad statement which has just been issued by Bapu.<sup>3</sup> His heart seems to be breaking. The world is not meant for the sensitive. I thought I was hardened enough but I was mistaken.

I must go to the station now.

Love,

Your loving  
Papu

1. Indira Gandhi Papers, N.M.M.L.
2. Probably Popatlal Shah, a businessman in Paris.
3. See p. 297.

## 13. To Indira Nehru<sup>1</sup>

Lucknow  
12.5.1939

Darling Indu,

It is a month today, is it not?, since you left Allahabad and now you are many thousands of miles away. I do not quite know where you are—I suppose you are still in England, probably in London. But I hesitate to send this letter to the Y.W.C.A. and yet I suppose that is the best

1. Indira Gandhi Papers, N.M.M.L.



address. Louise Morin wrote to me of your arrival in and departure from Paris. Of your arrival in London I have so far not heard.

For the past week I have been so engrossed in Lucknow affairs that I have almost forgotten Hitler, Mussolini and all their unholy tribe. I came here specially for the Shia-Sunni trouble. It has grown to enormous dimensions and nearly 8,700 Shias are in prison and the bitterness between the two is something unbelievable. For this week I have spent long and exhausting hours, nearly all day and till far into the night, talking, discussing, arguing, drafting statements. Gradually we seemed to be coming nearer a settlement, or at any rate a provisional arrangement. We thought of clinching the matter today and then at the last moment everything broke down! And so here we are wondering what to do, at a loose end. Still I suppose we have to go on trying and we shall make another effort tomorrow. Anything more distressing or irritating I can hardly imagine.

To add to my troubles I fell ill. Nothing much but I was confined to bed. I am up again and have been pushed about in the hospital for various X-rays which displayed a fairly healthy inside.

Ranjit lies in the grip of a fierce attack of malaria with his temperature running to over 106°F.

I am for the present held up here because of the Shia-Sunni affair. I do not know how long I shall have to stay on. In any event I have to be here again a few days later for various meetings.

I shall go to Bombay at the beginning of June and remain there for 2 weeks or more. So remember to write to me there.

Agatha has taken with her a gramophone record for you. This is the new *Bande Mataram* tune. Do you remember a doctor who travelled with us when we went to Santiniketan? He promised to send you a python's skin. Well, he has sent it. I do not quite know how to send it on to you. Such things give trouble in the customs. I shall try to find someone to take it.

Love,

Your loving  
Papu

## 14. To Indira Nehru<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
July 3, 1939

Darling Indu,

Early on the 1st of June I left Allahabad for Bombay and on the 30th night I returned after a full month's absence. I have come back for a few days only—brief visits to Allahabad and Lucknow and then back to Bombay on my way to Ceylon. For I am going to Ceylon for a week or ten days, not for pleasure or rest but on business.

It is long since I have written to you—two weeks or so since I wrote to you from Juhu.<sup>2</sup> My letters to you grow infrequent, or at any rate the letters I actually write and post. But other letters take shape in my mind and remain unwritten. Often I think of writing to you, for you are always in my mind, but I hesitate and put it off. A vague feeling that too frequent letters might be a nuisance and a burden to you holds me back. It is hateful to have to write because one has to. I do not want you to feel that way and so the letters I send you go at much longer intervals than they used to.

Perhaps I am undergoing some inner change also due to age and a variety of experiences. I am withdrawing into myself more and more and my incursions into the outer world are being limited. They are far too many still and I am entangled in a hundred ways. One part of me pushes out, the other tries to hide itself from the world. A Jekyll and Hyde existence. Here in Allahabad the introvert prevails and I live in this big house in absolute silence with very few interruptions. A visitor might well think that the house is uninhabited. Most of the rooms are locked and no one visits them. I reach Anand Bhawan and come up to my room and pay a visit to yours and look round and see the familiar pictures and books and articles. Then back to my room where I live day and night except for brief visits down below for food or to see an occasional visitor. I do not encourage visitors and I am glad that they respect my wishes. I am beginning to think that there is something in the old Hindu idea of *sanyasa* after a certain age. There is no chance of my becoming a *sanyasi* but the idea is not without attraction.

Bundles of books awaited me here, most of them sent by authors or publishers. There was Gunther's *Inside Asia* and Edward Thompson's

1. Indira Gandhi Papers, N.M.M.L.

2. Not printed.



new book—*You Have Lived Through All This*, which to my surprise I found he had dedicated to me. I have been reading these and musing on this strange world in which we live.

I have mentioned above that I am going to Ceylon. For some time past the lot of Indians in Ceylon has grown progressively worse. Indeed all over the world they are being ill-treated and, from some places, kicked out. Little Ceylon has been behaving very shabbily. Two weeks ago, I had an indirect and informal invitation from some ministers of the Ceylon Government to go there. I sent a disdainful reply. If Indians were not good enough for Ceylon, Ceylon was not good enough for me. But when the Working Committee pressed me to go on their behalf and the A.I.C.C. passed a resolution to this effect, I had to agree. So I am going by air on the 15th. Probably I shall be in Colombo most of the time but I hope to steal a day for Kandy and a few hours for Anuradhapura where I want to see again the old statue of the seated Buddha in contemplation. For the last seven years I had a picture of this almost always with me, in prison or outside. Do you remember the sonnet I sent you long ago, I think from Almora gaol?...<sup>3</sup>

Desireless I might wish to be, but not immortal or unerringly wise, and to disdain human dreams is to disdain life.

I gladly accepted the job in Ceylon although it is a difficult one and there is little hope of success. It is a matter of a week or two only at the most, and it takes me away from scores of other troubles here. Although it is intensive and hard work, it does not disturb me or distress me. I was indeed thinking vaguely of going to China for a few weeks—did I write to you about it? This Ceylon visit comes in the way somewhat but I have not entirely given up the idea of a China visit. If there are no international complications and no internal bust-up, I might yet go there. If so I shall go by air about the 20th August direct to Chungking, returning if possible by the Burma Road. But all this is in the air and I shall decide on my return from Ceylon at the end of this month.

Indeed everything is in the air because of continuous talk of war, and if war comes, all our little plans will be upset. How it will affect you I do not know but I do not worry for you can well look after yourself. You will decide for yourself what to do and where to go. If you require more money you can get it directly from Bachhraj or write to me. It seems hardly possible that we shall escape war for long. I hate the prospect of war and yet I wish this tension would cease and something definite should take place to end the present instability.

3. Not printed here. See *Selected Works*, Vol. 6, p. 370.



War of course would end so many things in India and we shall all be on the high road again.

Betty is also going to Ceylon, not exactly with me but at the same time. She has been unwell and a fortnight away will do her good.

Kailas has reached London—I suppose you have heard from him. Birju Bhai accompanied him on the *Victoria*. In Paris he spent two days with Louise Morin and Jean Jacques.<sup>4</sup> Shiela suddenly decided to follow him and has sailed by the P & O boat on July 1st. She is going all the way by sea to Tilbury.

The memorial hospital has at last begun to take shape. The architects and contractors are here and are digging the foundations. It should be ready and functioning within a year.

The hot summer day waxes and wanes and wearily passes into the brief night. It is very hot and stuffy. The monsoon clouds lessen the heat of the sun but increase the closeness of the air.

I go tonight to Lucknow for Congress committee meetings.

Love,

Your loving  
Papu

4. Son of Louise Morin; now working in the International Labour Organisation.



## MISCELLANEOUS

15. To Rabindranath Tagore<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
December 1, 1938

My dear Gurudeva,

Thank you for your letter.<sup>2</sup> The state of Bengal is certainly distressing and it is up to all of us to improve conditions there. It is a curious paradox but the very fact of Bengal being clever and advanced in many ways has brought about various crises. As a matter of fact, the whole of India is rapidly going towards a crisis. I do not for the moment refer to a conflict with British imperialism which is always possible, but to an internal crisis due to our own inner weaknesses. I suppose we have to pass through these periods and cannot easily avoid them.

I should greatly like to discuss many subjects with you and to have your advice with regard to them. If you will permit me I shall come a little later, after various executive meetings including the Working Committee which takes place soon. I can well understand your distress at the state of Bengal and India. Every sensitive person in India must feel this distress. I suppose the only thing to do is to face these problems fairly and squarely and do one's best.

Yours affectionately,  
Jawaharlal

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. Tagore was distressed at the deepening crisis in Bengal, and wanted to discuss it with Jawaharlal.

## 16. On Wearing European Dress<sup>1</sup>

Whenever I have gone to Europe I have usually worn European clothes because they are much more suited to the climate and environment there. It seems to me as absurd for me to wear a dhoti and a *kurta* in Paris or London as to wear European attire in the villages of India. We wear khaddar in India for many reasons, political, economic and social; but the very idea underlying khaddar does not apply to importing khaddar to distant countries to be worn there. As a matter of fact it is next to impossible to wear the usual Indian dress in a Swiss winter climate with the ground covered with snow. One has thus to adapt oneself to the climate and the environment. This has nothing to do with Indian nationalism. The very idea about a national dress is that it pertains to a nation. In the case of a person like Mahatma Gandhi special considerations apply and it would be absurd for ordinary folk to wear his dress in India or outside. On special Indian occasions, or Indian gatherings in foreign countries, it is desirable to wear Indian dress and I did so whenever such an occasion arose. On other occasions, an attempt to wear Indian dress needlessly attracts the attention of crowds and interferes with one's work.

1. Statement to the press, Allahabad, 2 December 1938. *The Leader*, 4 December 1938.

## 17. To F. E. Aristarchi<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
December 8, 1938

My dear Friend,<sup>2</sup>

Thank you for your letter. I am very sorry to learn of your difficulties and I wish I could help you.<sup>3</sup> But my recent visit to Europe has been a heavy financial burden on me and for the first time I am involved in

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. (b. 1893); Greek princess.
3. She had regretted not being able to repay the loan of £ 300 borrowed from Jawaharlal and had requested for another loan of £ 250.



debt which I find difficult to pay. I am thus wholly unable to help you in the manner suggested. I have to make every effort to pay all the debts I have incurred. I am sure you will understand my position.

Indira has not been keeping well and I am rather anxious about her.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

### 18. To Lionel Fielden<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
December 23, 1938

My dear Fielden,

I have your letter.<sup>2</sup> I realise that I am a disappointing man. I disappoint myself frequently enough. But your charge of unfairness is not quite justified. Why do you imagine that I have a grievance against you which you must remove?

If possible I shall give the talk on Hindustani. But I am not likely to be in Delhi or in Madras in any event. And whenever I go to Bombay for two or three days, I am frightfully full up.

If I come to Delhi, I shall let you know.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. In his letter of 9 December 1938, he had complained that Jawaharlal had not recommended some good men for his staff and had declined to broadcast.

**19. To Madam Sun Yat-sen<sup>1</sup>**

Allahabad  
December 27, 1938

Dear Madam Sun,

Your letter dated July 7th reached me a few days ago. Mr. Leaning,<sup>2</sup> the bearer of it, missed me in India as I was in Europe at the time. He again missed me in Europe as I was then on my way back to India. Ultimately he posted the letter. I am sorry I did not have the chance of meeting Mr. Leaning and of having from him first-hand information of the situation in China.

It has been a great pleasure to me to have your letter. We have been following with the closest and most anxious interest the situation in China. I wish we could be of some real help to you. But unfortunately we are so restricted and confined that our capacity to help our friends abroad is limited. But we have had innumerable great demonstrations in favour of the Chinese people, and the whole of India has felt at one with them in their hour of trial. To send you our sympathy is a poor enough gift when you have to face great trials and privations, even an account of which makes us shudder. Yet perhaps every little counts in the end and we have to work to the best of our ability in the common cause. I have the fullest faith in China's future and I am convinced that she will triumph over her present difficulties.

It is over 11 years ago that I had the privilege of meeting you for a short while in Moscow, but I have carried ever since a vivid and delightful memory of that meeting. You were good enough to send me later a photograph of yourself and Dr. Sun Yat-sen.<sup>3</sup> I do not know if I ever thanked you for this. I was not sure where to write to and about that time many strange things were happening in China. This photograph has been a treasured possession of mine.

With all good wishes for the New Year to you and your brave people,

Yours very sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. John Leaning, a member of the China Defence League.

3. (1866-1925); founder of the Kuomintang Party.



20. To A.C.N. Nambiar<sup>1</sup>

December 1938

My dear Nanu,  
I should like you to get into touch with two Jewish experts in Vienna. These two are:

1. Martin Jahoda, Blechturm-gasse 22, Vienna IV. (Age 35. After completing studies joined the family printing house of Jahoda and Siegel in Vienna. Worked in various capacities and raised to the management of the plant consisting of various types of machines, including rotary machines. Claims knowledge of the construction and working of all these machines and can repair them.)

2. Hans Mahler, Windmuhlgasse 11/15, Vienna VI. (Age 47. Worked for many years in the Steyermuhl Paper Manufacturing and Printing Works, which are said to be the largest and best known in the graphical and newspaper line in Austria, publishing the biggest newspapers. After 15 years' employment became general manager of all the printing work. Claims to be an expert in the graphical and newspaper industry.)

We should like to engage one of them to supervise the printing department of the *National Herald*. It will be necessary to interview them and for this purpose I would suggest your going to Vienna if you can manage it. The following points have to be determined:

1. Their technical knowledge and capacity in regard to machines, printing and the kind of work they will have to do here. This work, to begin with, is on a modest scale, but we hope it will grow.
2. Their general political outlook and how they would fit in with Indian conditions and our movement. They are not supposed to take part in the politics here, but it is desirable that their general outlook should be a favourable one. They should be able to adjust themselves to new surroundings and working with somewhat inefficient workers.
3. We cannot afford big salaries. Generally speaking, I would suggest Rs. 250 a month. In this matter, I would like your own suggestions. Perhaps it might be better to give housing accommodation and a smaller salary.
4. The contract should be for a year to begin with but we hope to extend it. In any event, we shall, of course, not leave them in the

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

lurch. If they are really good, there are plenty of openings for them, and, at the worst, we shall make ourselves responsible for sending them back if they want to. A long contract is undesirable without experience of each other.

5. About the voyage expenses to India, it will help us of course if some of the Jewish agencies could pay them.

These are some of the obvious points. I should like you to take immediate steps in this matter. A copy of the reply that you send me might also be sent to V.K. Krishna Menon. If we choose someone, we shall have to take steps to get visas and Krishna Menon will be able to help in this in London.

You mentioned to me that some good newspaper printing machines were to be had at cheap rates. I should like to have particulars of these. I am not sure that we shall require one but it is just possible that need for them might arise.

Could you also send particulars of the experts of the glass industry about whom you spoke to me? You told me that some Social Democrat Germans in the Sudeten areas were available for employment. If they are not expensive, it is possible that the U.P. Government might engage them.

Yours affectionately,  
Jawaharlal

## 21. Keshab Chandra Sen<sup>1</sup>

It is not sufficient for you merely to honour the memory of Keshab Chandra Sen<sup>2</sup> but rather to understand what exactly he had stood for and profit by that and realise with its help what the roots of the present problems are—because all our problems have roots in the past—and try to find the right solution for them.

It is very unusual for me to have to address a gathering on more or less a religious subject, because, essentially, Keshab Chandra Sen was

1. Speech delivered on the occasion of the birth centenary of Keshab Chandra Sen at Calcutta on 2 January 1939. From *National Herald*, 7 January 1939.
2. (1838-1884); joined Brahmo Samaj, 1857; founded Brahmo Bandhu Samaj; advocated women's education; campaigned against the segregation of Harijans and for the abolition of the practice of early marriage of girls and of polygamy.



a man of religion, a man of faith; and although in some respects I may not be entirely devoid of faith, I am certainly not a man of religion. I have felt considerable irritation at the various manifestations of religion in this country and I think as I grow older I may become more tolerant in my action, and perhaps in my words too, but in my mind I would grow more intolerant of such manifestations.

When I say this, I speak of every religion in this country. Of course, whether it is right and proper to judge a religion by certain manifestations is another question; but obviously for the average man religion means these very manifestations and nothing more.

So it is curious that a person like me should be chosen to deliver an address on this occasion. You will forgive me if I deal with the subject not perhaps from the point of view of a man of religion, because I am not particularly interested in that point of view, but from another point of view which appeals to me more.

Keshab Chandra Sen has always struck me as one in the great line of people in India who have tried to bring about a certain synthesis among the various conflicting ideas and ideals which have existed in this country. Now, India more than any other country, as far as I know, has succeeded in bringing about a synthesis between the various conflicting ideals. Indeed the whole of her history is full of attempts to assimilate all manner of religions and thoughts. Perhaps the strength of India in the past has been partly due to this spirit of absorption and assimilation of various ideas. It has also accounted for its weakness. However, the fact remains that if we study Indian history, we find the process of absorption and assimilation going on all the time, as a result of which we find in India, on the religious plane, and on the plane of thought, an astounding tolerance, which no country, except China, has exhibited.

Christianity is older in India than in Europe. In south India, it is a religion of the soil which, like any other religion, has existed for the last 1,800 years, and which bears no connection with the advent of Europeans in India. In fact, the type of Christianity which exists in south India has been wiped out from Europe. It exists in Syria today. References in history can be found to a small group called Nestorians who played a prominent part in the history of the early Christian church and ultimately were wiped out of existence by other Christian sects. But, in southern India, the Christians who came into this country about 1,800 years ago still thrive as a flourishing community.

When Islam came, India was in a very stagnant condition. And unfortunately the Islam that came to India had itself lost much of its vigour. I would not say that it was in a decadent condition, but it

was all the while approaching towards decadence. Islam in India did not come through the tolerant Arabs who had behind them the strength of Islamic philosophy but it came through the Central Asian people who represented the sword in Islam. India thus met Islam in the wrong way. The conflict became a political conflict with the conquerors. This, however, in time became associated in the public mind with the conflict between the Islamic religion and the religion of the country.

Islam brought along with it a new current of thought into India which rightly influenced her architecture, her painting and many other aspects of life.

Though Islam came to India in the wrong way, still the process of assimilation started bringing about some kind of synthesis between these two rival thought-currents. It developed considerably through the efforts of men like Guru Nanak and Kabir and monarchs like Akbar who in his own way deliberately set out to bring about that synthesis in the life of India. He did not succeed to the extent he hoped to but, practically speaking, he was the first king to attempt that task. Unfortunately, the work was not continued after his death. But the process, nevertheless, continued, although before it reached its culmination, another force came in.

It was in the nineteenth century that the reaction to that force was first felt in the country. The first prominent person to give expression to this feeling was Raja Ram Mohan Roy.<sup>3</sup> I feel that as time passes the Raja would be recognised not only in India as one of the greatest men of the nineteenth century but throughout the world.

The process that had already started assumed a very complex aspect. On the one hand, the country was swept with Western ideas and Western thoughts that had come in the wake of the conquerors, and, on the other, there was a natural reaction to the West, because they were the conquerors, which culminated in political and social opposition. It was a terrible conflict; and yet out of that peculiar and complex situation there came up Raja Ram Mohan Roy, having a tremendous breadth of vision to see something which was not obvious. It was indeed very difficult to see through the veil of time and point out the right path.

There came up a number of eminent men in Bengal because Bengal, as compared to other parts of India, came into touch with European culture sufficiently early. And one of the greatest among them was Keshab Chandra Sen who also tried to solve the problems of the age,

3. (1772-1833); social and religious reformer; advocated the abolition of suttee; founded the Brahmo Samaj in 1828.



though not on a political plane, for the time was not ripe for political action. He, therefore, thought on the mental plane as well as on the social plane and became a great reformer on the social plane.

He tried to get rid of the various superstitious customs and habits which dragged the Indian people down and enfeebled them, and sought to bring into India influences of modern thought. The ultimate conflict in India might be called the conflict between the basic Indian thought and the modern thought but more so between the modern thought and certain old customs and superstitious practices. Keshab's action in discarding what was bad in the existing order, and accepting the good from the West, was certainly of a revolutionary character.

People today talk freely of revolution without realising fully what the term actually signifies. A revolutionary act must be judged keeping in view the time and the environment in which it is performed. For instance, the late Dadabhai Naoroji, whose speeches would today sound extremely moderate, was in fact not less revolutionary than the people who indulged in talks of revolution. That action alone must be regarded as a revolutionary action which produces revolutionary results. A certain action, on the other hand, might prove to be counter-revolutionary the very next day.

## 22. Problems of Currency and Finance<sup>1</sup>

For a layman to have his say in matters reserved for experts and specialists is a dangerous venture. In the modern world currency and finance are, like the ancient mysteries, a close preserve of the elect. And yet, they govern our destiny far more than the gods of old did when the world was young. Howsoever intricate and mysterious they might be, we must understand these for if we ignore them, we do so at our peril. The controversy about the ratio has been with us now for many years and it has become an urgent problem for the state and the people. Professors and economists may argue and quarrel about the theory of it but the burden of the present ratio falls in practice upon our people and our industry and agriculture. The argument still goes on, but there are few major questions in India on which there has been

1. Allahabad, 9 January 1939. Foreword to *Indian Monetary Policy* by B. P. Adarkar, professor of economics, Allahabad University.

such a consensus of opinion and such a unanimity of opposition to the policy of the Government of India. Most experts oppose this policy; Indian businessmen and manufacturers, having themselves suffered greatly under it, are bitter at its continuance, and the National Congress has again repeated in emphatic language its condemnation of it and demanded a change.<sup>2</sup> I have no doubt in my own mind that the artificially fixed exchange value of the rupee has injured not only our industry but also the mass of our agriculturists.

But the question now before us is not merely one of fixing one and four pence as the value of the rupee. It is doubtful if even that will meet the requirements of today and it might be necessary to fix an even lower figure. We have had our finances and currency juggled far too long in the interests of British vested interests. The time has come when this must end, however much the British Government might object.

I am glad that Mr. Adarkar has written this book, and I hope that many will read it and thus gain an understanding of this important problem.

2. In a resolution, passed on 14 December 1938, the Congress Working Committee demanded that the British Government should take immediate steps to lower the ratio to 1s. 4d.

## 23. To Gregg M. Sinclair<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
January 22, 1939

Dear Mr. Sinclair,<sup>2</sup>

I am very sorry that we could not meet and that I missed you even when you came to Allahabad. I have long wanted to go to America, and I suppose I shall manage to get there one day. But for the present, I do not see how I can get away from India for several months. I can realise that if I go to America I must not get tied up with any particular organisation, or even some odd groups of my own countrymen there.

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. (b. 1890); an American professor; taught art in Japan and in the University of Hawaii; director, Oriental Institute, Hawaii, 1935-40.



The world is changing so fast and changing in the wrong direction that it is impossible to say what one will have to do in future. India seems to be much quieter than Europe at the present moment, and yet there are deep rumblings and I fear the future is not going to be plain sailing.

With all good wishes,

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

#### 24. To K. Ahmad Abbas<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
25-2-1939

My dear Abbas,

Your letter.<sup>2</sup> I have heard a great deal about Nazi propaganda in India. But it is difficult to have concise material. Of course, the German consuls take part in it, so also German firms, and sometimes Indian representatives of German firms. Much of this propaganda is supposed to be cultural, i.e., Nazi cultural activities are boomed up in apparently inoffensive articles in the press. These articles are sent sometimes by Indian students in Berlin but they are written probably by the Nazi propaganda department.

I am told that Aligarh Muslim University has become quite a centre for this propaganda as there are a number of Nazi women there who are wives of professors. I understand that both the German consul and the Italian consul were invited to the university to address the students.

Some years back I learnt from a fairly reliable source that the Government of India was encouraging this propaganda in India.

Of course, there is scope for the spread of totalitarian ideas in India, though I think that feeling against them at this stage is very strong specially in Congress circles. They are therefore concentrating on the communal organisations, and both the Muslim League and the Hindu

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-31(K.W.)/1939, pp. 193-195, N.M.M.L.

2. In his letter of 22 February 1939, Abbas requested Jawaharlal to comment on the reported Nazi propaganda in India.

Mahasabha talk definitely in totalitarian language and praise the fascist countries.

It is true that I wrote an anonymous article<sup>3</sup> as mentioned by John Gunther. This article appeared in *The Modern Review* in, I think, November 1937. It was called *The Rashtrapati* by Chanakya.

I am afraid little can be done now to sponsor a tour for the Chinese lady you mention.<sup>4</sup> This may be possible later.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

3. See *Selected Works*, Vol. 8, pp: 520-523.

4. While in Europe, Abbas had given to Jawaharlal the address of a Chinese lady who wished to come to India on a lecture tour if it was sponsored by the Congress.

## 25. Khadi<sup>1</sup>

As I stand before you, I realize how your eyes must be thirsting to behold another figure, your ears to hear another voice that is far away. This exhibition is an incarnation of Gandhiji's dream and it is he who should, in the fitness of things, have performed its opening ceremony. I, therefore, felt no small hesitation when Seth Govind Das asked me over the phone that I should officiate on this occasion. But, I said to myself, men may come and men may go, but our country and our country's fight for freedom must go on for ever. And so I have stepped into the breach.

In exhibitions of the ordinary type you will find that prominence is given to articles produced by big industrial concerns with a name, and a variety of popular entertainments and shows is provided. The Congress exhibition, however, is intended to serve a different purpose. It has constituted a regular feature of the Congress annual sessions now for a considerable time. Some four or five years ago, it was given its present orientation. Since then the object that it has set before itself has been to bring to popular attention handiworks of art and craftsmanship

1. Speech at the inauguration of the khadi and village industries exhibition at the Tripuri Congress session, 6 March 1939. *Harijan*, 18 March 1939.



produced in our villages in order to educate our village folk, particularly our peasantry. The task that confronts us today is to resurrect and popularize thousands of dead and dying handicrafts that once flourished in our villages and to instil fresh hope and courage into the drooping spirits of our masses. Without solving the problem of the villages, India's problem cannot be solved.

Some people think that the revival of khadi and other village industries would put back the clock of our country's progress and that India's salvation can come only through a process of large-scale industrialization. I call myself a socialist, and, as such, I do believe that large-scale industries have a place in this country. Anything that increases the material well-being of the country is bound to have its repercussion on the people. But we shall never be able to move the India of the rural masses through mere multiplication of big factories. It can only be reached through khadi and village industries. By all means let us have big factories for the production of things that cannot be manufactured in our villages. Let the big manufacturer and the small artisan function, each in his own place and within his respective legitimate sphere. There is no inherent conflict between the two and there need be none. Those who call khadi worthless prove their own worthlessness. They will never really understand our country's problems. If we must have big factories, they should not be run on the present lines. We should take care that they do not give a handful of capitalists power to oppress and exploit the masses.

I have spent about an hour in going round the exhibition, but, as a matter of fact, even a whole day would be all too insufficient for it. To do full justice to it, one must devote to it at least two or three days. This exhibition is verily a school for education where we can learn many things that are worth learning. Khadi has added to the prestige of our country. In the beginning, khadi used to be coarse and clumsy. Today all that has been revolutionized and even a hurried round of the various khadi stalls will show to anybody what artistic skill and perfection our village craftsmen are today capable of. During the course of the last hundred and fifty years we have nearly lost all our artistic taste and skill. In our rich men's homes we do not find evidence of a sense of beauty or of comfort. Our village folks' houses are disfigured by cheap, flimsy foreign prints which no one with a claim to culture in any other part of the world would deign to touch with a pair of tongs. They deserve only to be thrown to the flames. Lack of taste stares us in the face everywhere and has spelt our country's ruin. Khadi has served to renovate our artistic sense. Khadi that is produced today is a thing of beauty. It was a perfect feast for

me to see the various khadi exhibits in the Khadi Bhawan. It has gladdened my heart to find that, as a result of the revival of khadi and other village crafts, the artistic faculty of our village masses that had nearly been choked, is now being re-awakened and re-educated.

Spinning provides livelihood to a large section of our sisters in the villages. In order that they might all be able to earn a minimum subsistence wage, the All India Spinners Association has introduced increased rates for spinning. This, in its turn, has led to a rise in the price of khadi. Some people complain that khadi has become dear. But you should refuse to be caught by the lure of cheapness which is obtained by underpaying the spinners, and purchase only such khadi in the manufacture of which standard spinning wage has been paid. It is such khadi alone which deserves the name khadi. But how is the consumer to be sure that the standard wage was paid in the production of a particular stock of khadi? This can be done by restricting the purchase of khadi to khadi *bhandars* which are either run directly by the All India Spinners Association or are certified by it.

I am sure that the khadi and village industries sections and the agricultural section organized by the C.P. Government in this exhibition will do real good to our village folk, and particularly to our peasantry.

I would also invite your attention to the basic education section in the exhibition. Our current educational system has rightly been condemned as worthless as it serves only to make bookworms of our youths; it does not fit them for life. It needs badly to be overhauled. The question of mass education for India was discussed at Haripura. What troubled everybody was, how was it to be financed? A committee was set up under the presidentship of Dr. Zakir Husain to report on the matter. The report which Dr. Zakir Husain's committee has submitted on the Wardha scheme of education, as a result of their inquiry, is a valuable document. I heard it being highly praised even in England. The central thesis of this scheme is that the whole education of the child can be imparted through the medium of a handicraft and that the system if it is properly worked should make education self-supporting. There was a lot of confusion about this aspect of it at that time. Since then the Hindustani Talimi Sangh<sup>2</sup> has come into being and several institutions for imparting basic education have sprung up. Whilst time alone will show how far the Wardha scheme is capable

2. The Congress, at its Haripura session in February 1938, favoured the formation of an all-India education board to draft a programme of basic national education. On 23 April 1938, the Hindustani Talimi Sangh was formed at Wardha under the chairmanship of Zakir Husain.



of fulfilling all the expectations that have been entertained on its behalf, this much at least is clear that it provides us the key which can solve the question of education of India's masses.

## 26. To Mohammad Hatta<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
March 17, 1939

My dear Hatta,

It has been a great pleasure to receive your letter of the 12th February.<sup>2</sup> It is an age since I heard from you and, as you mention, my last letter to you five years ago was not answered. You have given a sufficient explanation for not having written.

What a long time you have had in prison and internment camps. Having had some experience myself of the thing, I can well appreciate what you have to pass through. But the world is changing rapidly and no one can tell what the future will bring.

I am asking my bookseller to send you my books. I am afraid all of them are not available here and one of my big books is out of print. I shall be happy to send you other books if you would care to have them.

Even before I heard from you, we had made some arrangements for your nephew.<sup>3</sup> I understand from friends in Karachi that he is getting a scholarship and is studying there in some educational institution. Now that I have heard from you, I shall certainly take interest in the young man, and I hope he will profit by his studies. Karachi is very far from Allahabad and it is not easy for me to meet him. But sometime or other I shall go there and have a look at him.

I hope you are keeping cheerful in your internment and fitting yourself by studying and otherwise for the work you may have to do later.

With all good wishes,

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. In his letter of 12 February 1939, Hatta regretted not being able to write to Jawaharlal for five years as he was under arrest. He also wanted to read books written by Jawaharlal.
3. Bustami Darwis, son of Mohammad Hatta's cousin.

**27. To V.K. Krishna Menon<sup>1</sup>**

Allahabad  
April 6, 1939

My dear Krishna,

Some time back I received your letter of the 7th March sending me particulars about Dr. Salomon Minc and his wife.<sup>2</sup> My sister has been trying hard to find out if they can be fitted in here. But there is a great deal of passive opposition and I do not know if anything will be done.

To give you some idea of the kind of opposition we have to face. Subhas wrote to me recently accusing me of trying to find an asylum for the Jewish refugees in India. He objected to this very strongly. As a matter of fact all I tried was to get a few competent experts and specialists. As for the Kamala Nehru Memorial Hospital, my doctor colleagues on the trust are violently opposed to the appointment of any foreigner.

As I think I wrote to you, the question of guarantee need not trouble us, as a Jewish committee in India has been formed to give any guarantee.

Yours affectionately,  
Jawaharlal

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. Italian Jewish experts in malarial and children's diseases; worked in German refugee camps.

**28. To Inayet Ali<sup>1</sup>**

Lucknow  
April 7, 1939

Dear Kunwar Inayet Ali,<sup>2</sup>

Some friends of mine from Meerut district have told me that a few families of cultivators, living in one of your villages, have displeased you

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. A landowner of Meerut district.



and that thereupon you have ordered them out of the village. I understand that they are statutory tenants and that there is some dispute in regard to rent which is before the court. I would not have troubled you about this small matter but I learnt that these seven families are homeless and are living in the jungles. I am troubled by their fate and I am sure you must be worried by it too. They may have done something to merit your displeasure, but they are ignorant folk, and I hope you will consider their present hardship and allow them to live in their village. You are a man of influence and prestige, and an act of generosity on your part will not only be appreciated by your tenantry but by others also. It is not my custom to interfere in such matters or to write about them, but in the present instance, I have thought it worthwhile to draw your attention to this in the hope that you will be good enough to show kindness to these people.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

## 29. To K. Rama Rao<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
April 18, 1939

My dear Rama Rao,

I enclose two articles for the *Herald*.<sup>2</sup> My name should not appear.

I am also trying to send you today a long extract from a book which I got yesterday. I think this is worth publishing *in extenso*.<sup>3</sup> I should like to write an editorial in regard to it also.<sup>4</sup>

Dr. Ganguli who is coming as our general manager has been delayed and will come a week later to Lucknow.

I understand that in Cawnpore there is considerable rivalry with *The Pioneer*, as to which gets there first. We should therefore make every effort to reach Cawnpore before *The Pioneer*. This might mean our starting printing earlier than we do now for the Cawnpore edition. This would also mean our not giving late news. But I still think that it is

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. See pp. 289-293.

3. An extract from Leonard Barnes's *Empire or Democracy* was printed in *National Herald* on 20 April 1939 under the title "India—the Crux".

4. Jawaharlal, in fact, wrote an article. See pp. 648-654.

desirable to send our paper early. Most people attach greater importance to getting the paper early than to have a late news. Please therefore issue definite instructions to have earlier printing and earlier supply of copies.

I hope to be in Lucknow on Sunday next for the day for the directors' meeting.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

### 30. To Frank C. Laubach<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
April 18, 1939

Dear Dr. Laubach,<sup>2</sup>

I regret the delay in answering your letter.<sup>3</sup> I am greatly interested in the literacy movement which is gathering momentum in India. With your great experience in the liquidation of illiteracy, this movement should derive great profit by your cooperation. I hope that the provincial governments in India who are pushing this literacy campaign will take full advantage of your expert knowledge and experience and will seek your cooperation. I am glad to learn that the world literacy committee of New York is interesting itself in this work in India. Any help that they may give in this work will be very welcome and will bear fruitful results.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. An American associated with the world literacy committee of New York; was sent to assist the National Christian Council of India, Burma and Ceylon in the work of spreading literacy.

3. In his letter of 7 March 1939, Laubach wanted Jawaharlal to write some words of appreciation for the efforts being made to spread literacy in India.



**31. To V. Lesny<sup>1</sup>**

Allahabad  
April 18, 1939

My dear Professor Lesny,

It was very good of you to send me your book on Rabindranath Tagore. The book was welcome indeed, but even more so, your kindly thought of us in the middle of all your difficulties. Believe me that we have been following, with the most anxious interest, all that has been happening, and we remember the friends we met during our stay in Prague.

With all good wishes,

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

**32. To Gopi Nath Bardoloi<sup>1</sup>**

Allahabad  
April 18, 1939

My dear Bardoloi,

Your letter of the 24th March about Rani Gaidilieu.<sup>2</sup> The facts you give are interesting. What I should like to know, however, is the official version in regard to her activities. As Premier you can no doubt get this from the proper authorities. The version that the India Office gave seemed to me a curious one. I want to check that.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. Bardoloi had written that, according to reports received by him, Rani Gaidilieu proclaimed herself as the queen of the tribe after her brother's execution and this had not been liked by the British Government. See also *Selected Works*, Vol. 8, pp. 501-502.

### 33. The Defence of India<sup>1</sup>

We have previously drawn attention to Mr. Leonard Barnes's new book *Empire or Democracy* and given some extracts from it relating to India. After dealing with the constitutional and legal aspects, Mr. Barnes considers the problem of military defence. The old argument that is so often put forward—that a free India will be incapable of defending herself—is discussed. If the Japanese or the Germans march into India, as the British march out, how will the Indians profit by the change? The army in India is here for two reasons:

1. To defend Indian territory from foreign invasion.
2. To defend British imperialist interests against the Indian people.

Mr. Barnes considers the first a legitimate reason, but the second is one which every democrat must repudiate. Even in regard to the first it might be added that a foreign invasion might be due to British imperial policy and if this was not controlling India, we would, in this respect, be safer. Our policy will inevitably be one of peace with our neighbours and other countries with no imperialist designs on others. This will not necessarily save us from foreign aggression but it will reduce the chances of invasion.

The problem before us is thus one of ensuring the military security of the Indian people from foreign aggression. This is entirely distinct from the defence of British imperial interests in India. It must be remembered, Mr. Barnes says, that the Indian liberationists stand for democracy and will thus be active allies in the defence of democracy elsewhere, including democracy in Britain. For those who favour democracy it becomes suicidal to oppose the freedom of India. Indeed, quoting President Bose, "the establishment of a socialist order in Britain is impossible of achievement without the liquidation of colonialism, and we who are fighting for the political freedom of India and other enslaved countries of the British Empire, are incidentally fighting for the economic emancipation of the British people as well."

The argument that a free India would fall an easy prey to Japan, Germany or Italy is an illusion which, as Jawaharlal has shown, is merely evidence of a latent imperialism colouring the outlook of those who call themselves democrats and socialists. Such an invasion is outside the

1. Allahabad 19 April 1939. J.N. Papers, N.M.M.L. This unsigned article was printed in *National Herald*, 22-23 April 1939.



field of political reality, unless, of course, a triumphant fascism dominates the world and the United States of America, the Soviet Union and England have been disposed of.

Quoting Nehru :

Japan is further away from India, for all practical purposes, than England is. The land route is entirely closed and impossible of passage, even for aircraft. The sea route is very long and terribly dangerous and cannot be negotiated till Japan is master of the sea and air, and Britain and the United States have been wholly disabled. Japan cannot think of coming to India till she has absorbed the whole of China, a task almost certainly beyond her competence and resources. Even after that, the next countries on the list are Australia, the Philippine Islands, the Netherlands and India.

It is equally fantastic to think in terms of a German or Italian invasion of India. Both these countries will have their work cut out for them in Europe and their objectives lie in Europe or north Africa. But if by any chance the fascist powers gain an overwhelming victory in a world war and the world lies prostrate before them, then, of course, anything might happen. Even so, India will not go as a gift to anybody. She will resist the invader to the utmost and, in spite of lack of military and such like resources, she has developed enough strength and technique of her own method of struggle to make an invasion a terribly burdensome operation. We have to struggle today with an entrenched system which has dug itself deep into our very soil. It will be far easier to deal with a new-comer who comes with hostile intentions.

Mr. Barnes expresses the contrast thus:

So long as India is maintained as a subordinate item in the British Empire, its fate in a general war will be decided on the battlefields of Europe.

While such a war is in progress, India will be a side-show from the standpoint of her British protectors, who will have their hands extremely full elsewhere, and for whom the Mediterranean route will almost certainly be closed. The British forces in India will have as their main duty the crushing of the Indian bid for independence which Nehru assures us will be made. In the process, India will be bled even whiter than she was in 1914-18.

In the event of British defeat in Europe, India would by reason of this bleeding be in poor shape to resist the entry of Britain's conquerors; even then a new invader need not expect to have everything his own way. If Britain came out on the winning side,

the question would be whether a war-worn Britain were too weak to fasten its grip afresh on India, or whether a drained India were too weak to throw off finally the deadweight of the British yoke.

Suppose, on the other hand, the case of an independent India, and estimate, as a military enterprise, its invasion by a power whose home base was in western Europe or the western Pacific and which had no foothold inside India. In this case, it would be necessary for the issue to be fought out, not on any European field or on the high seas, but actually on Indian soil.

The entire attacking force would have to be transported by sea. Even had the power in question to meet no naval challenge and no challenge from the air along its whole line of communications (an unlikely supposition), it would first have to build up a secure land base within striking distance of India; next to break through India's coastal defences and effect landings on a number of wide fronts in India itself; and finally from these advanced bases to proceed to the conquest and military occupation of a vast country solidly hostile and better trained than any other in the discipline of passive resistance. Even if the aggressor were a great world power, this would be at best a very formidable military adventure, fraught with all and more than all the perils and difficulties that confront the Japanese in their war with China.

Mr. Barnes points out that while progressive people in Britain find it relatively easy to see the need for supporting the Chinese liberationist struggle against Japanese imperialism, they understand less readily the need for supporting the Indian liberationist movement against British imperialism. Psychologically this may be curious and interesting; politically it is disastrous. For imperialism everywhere—British, Japanese, German, or Italian—is just as fatal to the basic aspirations of unprivileged classes in the colony-owning countries as it is to the subject peoples at the colonial end. The plain fact is that the defence of British democracy has been sustained in the last few years at least as gallantly and effectively by the Indian National Congress, the Negro strikers of Trinidad and Jamaica,<sup>2</sup> and the cocoa farmers of the Gold Coast,<sup>3</sup> as by the Trade Union Congress and the Labour Party at home. The forces of

2. A widespread labour strike for higher wages in Trinidad and Jamaica, in April-May 1938, in which doctors, sweepers, bus drivers and railway workers also joined, caused serious dislocation of everyday life.
3. A conflict over the fixation of prices between cocoa farmers and buyers led the former to burn a part of the crop in October 1937. The estimated loss amounted to over 250,000 tons.



British capitalism recognise this with complete frankness, and take their repressive counter-measures in the Gold Coast, the West Indies and India.

## II

From the analysis of the problem of defence in Mr. Leonard Barnes's new book *Empire or Democracy*, a summary of which appeared yesterday, it appears that the present so-called defence arrangements in India serve little purpose except to maintain the British raj against the wishes of the people of India themselves. Even if this is not entirely so, it is doubtful whether these arrangements could actually protect India from foreign aggression in the kind of concrete situation which we might have to visualise.

Mr. Barnes points out:

During the last six years, British foreign policy has been a major factor in putting the collective system out of action, in disintegrating international solidarity in Europe, in isolating the Soviet Union, in reducing France to impotence, in driving the U.S.A. and many smaller states back to neutrality, in combining the three fascist powers, strengthening them by the surrender of vital strategic positions, and inspiring them with the conviction that the world is their oyster.

One cumulative effect of this trend is that it has become physically and materially impossible for the small island of Britain to defend the whole vast British Empire single-handed against the triple danger that now threatens it. Once again, it must not be forgotten that the anti-Comintern pact<sup>4</sup> is one of the key factors in the current international situation, and is quite as capable of being employed against the British and French Empires as against the Soviet Union.

What is more, the defence of British imperial egoism against rival imperialisms is, as we have seen, not a cause that commands anything like unity within the empire or among the British people. In India particularly it would cause large-scale disaffection. Congress, which has the masses behind it, has declared its intention of resisting any attempt to defend India for imperialist purpose, and of using the situation created by an imperialist war to make a bid for independence.

4. The anti-Comintern agreement originally signed by Germany and Japan in November 1935 was later accepted by Italy in 1937 and Hungary, Manchukuo and Spain in 1939.

For these reasons, there can be only one form of guarantee for the defence of the people and territory of India, as distinct from the maintenance of British rule in India. It consists in the pooling of Indian defence in the defence of an "open" group of states within the League, with France, the Soviet Union, and Britain as the nucleus, based on arbitration, non-aggression, mutual assistance, economic cooperation, and an agreement to solve the colonial problem by way of the abolition of colonial status.

How is this end to be attained? Here lies the rub. For this involves a complete change of British foreign and colonial policy, in effect the liquidation of British imperialism, and the freedom of India. The crux is India. As Mr. Barnes says:

But—and this is the crucial point—such a scheme involves a free India. By free is meant not merely enjoying autonomy in respect of internal affairs, but free to conduct its own foreign policy, to make its own arrangements for defence, and to accept membership of the League of Nations in its own right. Such a scheme cannot be shared by an India faced with the problem of intensifying mass discontent with imperialist exploitation and repression, and at the same time preventing mass disillusionment with Congress ministries because of their inability to terminate that repression and exploitation; nor by an India promoted to a junior partnership in the firm of British imperialism and thereby obliged to identify itself with the repression and exploitation of the non-self-governing parts of the empire.

The problem of Indian defence is thus something much more than a technical problem. It is primarily and essentially a political problem and only when these basic conditions are satisfied can it be treated from the purely military point of view. An increase in Indian armament today is an increase in the power of British imperialism in India. If there is no popular control of the army, we are not only not interested in its growth, we are opposed to it for far more weighty reasons than financial ones. For this growth means the growth of the repressive apparatus of British imperialism.

This is illustrated by the character of the army in India and by the type of ammunitions manufactured in India. We all know the story of muddle and incompetence of the Mesopotamian campaign. The army staff and the officers were good enough for the frontier expeditions against unarmed or badly armed mountain folk, but they failed in modern warfare. Perhaps they have improved somewhat since then,



but evidently even the Commander-in-Chief did not think so a few years ago when he gave a frank talk to officers at Quetta. What is more interesting and quite recent is the result of the Chatfield Commission's investigations. We understand that a great push has been given to the manufacture of munitions in India and they are being turned out at a rapid pace. But what are these munitions? There are very few anti-aircraft guns, so far as we can find out. There are a vast number of bombs for use from the air being turned out, but the remarkable fact is that these bombs are for the most part of the small and light variety which are normally used for dropping on small villages during punitive expeditions.

If this is so then we have a glimpse of the kind of warfare for which the British military machine is preparing. It is not the defence of India that they have in mind but the suppression of India.

We have been deluded long enough by talk of 'defence' into imagining that the army was here for defence. In effect it has always been, and is, an army of occupation which thinks and functions in terms of holding down a hostile country. The Dehra Dun Academy<sup>5</sup> and all such attempts, and the talk of Indianisation, are the merest eyewash, and are, in addition, futile and ridiculous in this age of highly mechanised units. The defence of India will begin with the freedom of India. What exactly do we defend now?

While these wider considerations are of the essence of the problem, we cannot ignore the purely military aspect. Mahatma Gandhi has told us recently of the duty of pacifists in a war.<sup>6</sup> One can understand that position from an individualist's point of view. But we do not know how far he desires to adopt that policy nationally or collectively on behalf of the nation.

The Congress has certainly given no such indication so far and its creed of peaceful action does not necessarily apply to national defence against foreign aggression. It is difficult for us to understand how in case of violent aggression from outside a purely pacific attitude will prevail under existing circumstances. If peaceful action is to be applied to the alien aggressor there seems to be no particular reason why it should not also be applied to the criminal within, and the police force

5. Indian Military Academy, set up in 1932 for pre-commission training of cadets.

6. On 9 April 1939, Mahatma Gandhi wrote: "A true pacifist is a true satyagrahi ... In the coming test pacifists have to prove their faith by resolutely refusing to do anything with war whether of defence or offence. But the duty of resistance accrues only to those who believe in non-violence as a creed... It follows that such resistance is a matter for each person to decide for himself and under the guidance of the inner voice, if he recognizes its existence."



be disbanded. But the police still flourish and we have not heard of any proposal to put an end to them.

In the same way an army of defence is also likely to flourish, though we should of course associate ourselves in every way with attempts at disarmament, and otherwise have a policy of peace. If the defence forces are to remain, as apparently they must, we must refashion them entirely and give a popular basis to them, and make them really effective for defence. This is a question which is becoming increasingly vital and deserves careful thought.

#### 34. To Mohanlal Saxena<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
April 20, 1939

My dear Mohanlal,

I presume you are back in Lucknow. I have just received a letter from the auditors which is very disturbing. I do not know what we can do in the matter. It seems that an evil fate is pursuing us, or, to be more accurate, that we are thoroughly incompetent or incapable of managing our affairs. It is not the question of money, although that troubles us, but of inability to manage anything properly. I suggest that you might immediately see the auditors and try to find out what is the best course for us under the circumstances. Obviously on such matters no expense should have been spared in having additional staff to put the accounts right.

I shall come to Lucknow on Sunday morning as arranged. Meanwhile, Saiduddin<sup>2</sup> has sent me a letter from Bhola Nath,<sup>3</sup> which is also a troublesome matter.

I enclose the auditors' letter.

Yours affectionately,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. General Manager, Associated Journals Limited, Lucknow, the publishers of *National Herald*.

3. A paper merchant of Lucknow.



35. To Rafi Ahmad Kidwai<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
April 20, 1939

My dear Rafi,

Your letter of the 18th.<sup>2</sup> There is no point in your objecting to the tone of Maulana Azad's letter. His letters are dictated in Urdu and then translated by Ajmal Khan.<sup>3</sup>

You will remember that we had decided to have a meeting of the directors of the Associated Journals Limited next Sunday to pass the auditors' report and accounts. The auditors now write to say that our accounts are in such a muddle that they cannot do anything with them for a long time to come. Now this is a serious matter because the time for our annual meeting expires soon. I do not quite know what to do. I am sending a telegram to Mohanlal to see the auditors and try to find some way out of the muddle.

Saiduddin, meanwhile, sends me a love letter from Bhola Nath's who are very angry at the delay in paying them for their paper. I wonder when, if ever, we shall get rid of all the errors and mistakes that have been pursuing us. It is a terribly disheartening work. I shall anyhow come to Lucknow on Sunday next for the directors' meeting.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. Kidwai had written that though he would not blame Maulana Azad for the failure to resolve the Shia-Sunni tangle, he would say that the latter should not also blame Pant for all that had happened.
3. (1897-1969); Khilafatist and a Congressman of Allahabad; served as personal secretary to Maulana Azad till the latter's death in 1958; member, Rajya Sabha, 1964-69.

**36. To F.J. Warburg<sup>1</sup>**

Allahabad  
April 21, 1939

Dear Mr. Warburg,<sup>2</sup>

Thank you for your letter of April 14th. Your proposal is an attractive one. But I fear that it is quite impossible for me to undertake any such writing work. My time is taken up entirely with other activities and I can do no writing except occasional topical articles.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. Director of Martin Secker and Warburg, publishers in London. He had requested Jawaharlal to write a book on India for the *Voice of Civilization* series.

**37. To V.K. Krishna Menon<sup>1</sup>**

Allahabad  
April 21, 1939

My dear Krishna,

Your letter of the 11th April about Naidu.<sup>2</sup> I have not heard from Naidu. If he writes to me I shall see what can be done in the matter. In theory we are all intensely interested in the cooperative movement.

When I was in Prague last summer, a German Sudeten girl (not a Jew), employed by the Prague Government in some department dealing with Indian exports, was sent to us to act as our guide. She was with us for a good deal of time and helped us greatly. I liked her. When the Sudeten areas went over to Germany, she and her family had to face considerable difficulties as they were German Social Democrats.

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. Probably B. V. Narayanaswamy Naidu, an economist of Madras who was greatly interested in the cooperative movement; treasurer of the Madras Cooperative Union, 1944-47; economic adviser to the Madras Government, 1947; chairman, Forward Markets Commission from 1954 till his death in 1955.



Partly to get over this difficulty she married later a Czech and continued in state service. Now since the disappearance of Czechoslovakia, she and her husband evidently find it very hard to remain there and want to come out to India. What they can do here, I do not know. She wrote to me asking me to arrange for their visas to India. I said I could not do this but I sent her a little note, addressed to nobody, saying that I would be happy if they could get their visas to India and when they came here I would try to help them. More I could not do. Now I have received a cable from them to the following effect:

Your letter is insufficient. Please arrange telegram from Indian authority addressed British consulate Prague granting visas for us. Thanks.

Hertzka-Loew

Obviously I cannot do this and I am informing them about it. I am writing to you about this just to let you know in case the matter may come up before you and you might have something to suggest. The name and address of the girl is:

Mrs. Gertrud Hertzka-Loew  
Prague VII  
U. Vozovky 1211 (Bohemia)

Nambiar knows the girl well.

Yours affectionately,  
Jawaharlal

### 38. To Shanti Prasad Agarwal<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
April 22, 1939

Dear Shanti Prasadji,<sup>2</sup>

I have your letter of the 18th April.<sup>3</sup> I shall inquire from Mrs. Pandit about the facts. You will realise that in all such matters small things get exaggerated and by repetition, quite unconsciously, get distorted. I

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. An advocate of Moradabad.

3. This latter is not available.

do not know how far you yourself were a witness to what you have written.

I should also like you to consider that those of us who have to carry the burden of responsibility and who have to work very hard, suffer continuously from strain and tension. Anything that appears as obstruction in one's work or in a heavy programme is irritating. Our habits are such that most of our work is done somewhat inefficiently and wastefully. Any person who wants to introduce efficiency appears to be hard and harsh. And yet the problems that surround us are so many and so difficult that we can only face them by acting with speed and efficiency.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

### 39. Anti-Indian Films<sup>1</sup>

The Indian motion picture industry is celebrating its jubilee in Bombay. The recent growth of this industry has been remarkable and full of promise but we cannot congratulate it on the quality of the work produced, excepting of course some high-class films. We hope that every effort will now be made to improve this quality so that our films might be true interpreters of Indian life. Unfortunately the picture of India that foreign audiences see is entirely derived from foreign films, and almost all of these are unsatisfactory from this point of view. Some of these are definitely objectionable and aim at discrediting the Indian people and carry on imperialist propaganda. Occasionally, we learn that some provincial government or other has prohibited the display of some such picture. But this picture continues to be displayed, to the injury of India, in foreign countries. We cannot of course directly control such displays abroad, but there is no reason why our provincial governments should not express their displeasure at this and even take some steps to prevent it. The obvious step to take is to inform the producers that if they persist in displaying abroad an anti-Indian film which has been disapproved, none of their pictures will be licensed in India. Such a decision would speedily end the exhibition of the highly objectionable films which have been released recently.

1. Lucknow, 6 May 1939. Editorial in *National Herald*, 9 May 1939.



#### 40. Educational Use of Films<sup>1</sup>

All scientific discoveries can be pressed into service for the good of humanity. Only men must have the will to do so. The same is true of this 20th century discovery of movies and talkies. To what great educational and cultural use the films can be put has been best illustrated by the films about China that you have seen. The films have done much to bring all the world peoples together and the process should continue to the benefit of all humanity.

1. Message on the occasion of the silver jubilee celebrations of the Indian motion picture industry. *The Bombay Chronicle*, 6 May 1939.

#### 41. To K. Rama Rao<sup>1</sup>

Lucknow  
May 12, 1939

Dear Rama Rao,

I have been in bed for the last two days and have had time to read the *Herald* rather carefully. I have been surprised to find a large number of small errors which should have been corrected by the proof-readers. Some complaints of this were also made to me in Calcutta or elsewhere. I hope that your sub-editors will pay particular attention to this as it is irritating for the readers to come across mistakes.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

## 42. To Mohammad Habib<sup>1</sup>

Lucknow  
May 12, 1939

My dear Habib,

Your letter of April 16th has only just been handed to me by Hafiz Osman.<sup>2</sup> I have had a talk with him. We shall be very glad to utilise his services for Congress work and I hope that some arrangement will be arrived at. There is one difficulty, however. Our national service is regulated by certain rules, as we have tried to make it a kind of civil service for Congress work. People who join it are not expected to stand for election for any Congress office or membership of an elective committee. We want to keep them above party squabbles and to give them a definite status of a permanent organisation running the Congress machinery, apart from conflicts in Congress policy. Our idea is to give a certain prestige to them. Hafiz Osman, however, does not like this prospect. I have suggested to him, however, to see some of my colleagues and I hope that something will be done. It is not a question of giving financial help so much, but of how this is to be done in accordance with our rules. As our organisation has grown, its rules have grown with it and have become more intricate. In any event, a person like Hafiz Osman should be encouraged in every way to do national work and I hope that a way out will be found.

I am afraid all of us who have the misfortune to be tied up with politics have to suffer a great deal of heartache. The world today is a damnably bad place to live in.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. A Congressman of Aligarh; suffered imprisonment several times during the freedom struggle; died 1973.



#### 43. To C. Khaliquzzaman<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
May 15, 1939

My dear Khaliq,

So you have come back after your long wandering.<sup>2</sup> I wanted to see you in Lucknow yesterday but I heard you were fully occupied as of course you must be on the day of your return. I shall be in Lucknow again for a few days and I hope we shall meet then. I hope you have returned fit and strong and are keeping well.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L. Also printed in C. Khaliquzzaman's *Pathway to Pakistan*, (Lahore, 1961), p. 213.
2. Khaliquzzaman was one of the Indian Muslim representatives at the Palestine conference held in Cairo in October 1938 to find ways to prevent the partition of Palestine. Later, he visited other places in Europe and the Middle East, and returned to India in May 1939.

#### 44. To Carl Heath<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
May 16, 1939

Dear Mr. Heath,

You were good enough to write to me some time back about my speech at the States People's Conference.<sup>2</sup> I have not thanked you for that letter yet. The last few months here have distressed me greatly in various ways. But I suppose we must not complain, as it is not better anywhere else.

I am sending you separately a series of articles I wrote six weeks ago before the Congress.<sup>3</sup> They are out of date now to some extent, but still they might interest you.

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. See pp. 418-431.
3. See pp. 488-520.

With all good wishes,

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

#### 45. Ernst Toller<sup>1</sup>

Ernst Toller is dead, killed by his own hand.<sup>2</sup> His hand may have done the deed, but he was done to death by that malignant spirit of brutal violence which reigns in Europe today under the names of fascism and Nazism. How many murders, and that crushing of the soul that is worse than murder, stand to its credit during the long nightmare of the past six years. For the idealist and the sensitive in spirit the world grows more and more difficult to endure, the wide spaces narrow down and enclose and stifle, and escape comes often only through death. Those of them that are fortunate die fighting for their ideals against the evil that oppresses them. But the real tragedy comes to those for whom life has lost all purpose, all meaning, all hope.

Toller was a rare spirit, gentle and sensitive, with the genius of a poet and with a poet's prophetic insight at times, who found the growing violence and the crushing of freedom an intolerable burden. Those who knew him loved him as a dear and precious comrade, but scores of thousands came to know him intimately through his writings, his brilliant plays, his moving letters from prison, his sad autobiography—*I Was A German*. Right through these books of his the reader saw the inner struggles that shook him, the reactions of a sorrow-laden world on a sensitive poet's mind meant for song and joy. Hater of violence in all its forms, his mind struggled with the problem that faces all of us, how to meet the violence of the oppressor and the tyrant without indulging in the hated violence ourselves. Gradually, and with painful processes of thought, he came to the conclusion that violence against the aggressor was not only justified but necessary to prevent the collapse of what he valued. Writer of winged words and phrases in the German language that he loved, he came to believe that the eloquence of the pen

1. Allahabad, 24 May 1939. Article printed in *National Herald*, 26 May 1939.

2. Toller committed suicide on 22 May 1939. See also *Selected Works*, Vol. 2, p. 279.



has sometimes to give place to the eloquence of the sword in defence of freedom, lest freedom itself die and all eloquence perish. He himself did not take to the sword, but his sympathies went out to those who were fighting for freedom and all his energy was spent in helping their cause.

I met him first twelve years ago in Brussels. A little while before he had come out of prison where the German Social Democratic government had kept him for five years. His fine, young and sensitive face bore the well-known impress of prison and lines of sorrow crossed it. Yet there was much to live for, much to do, and he was full of vitality and love of work for the cause he held dear.

Seven years later I met him again, an exile from his native land, living on sufferance in other countries. He was a Jew and there was no room for Jews in Hitler's Germany. Yet this Jew was such that later he wrote to me that he entirely agreed with what I had written in favour of the Arabs in Palestine. He had married a charming German girl.

Again I saw him many times during last summer in England and France. Munich and the betrayal of Czechoslovakia hit him hard and the shadows deepened on his face. Yet there was something to live for, there was Spain fighting magnificently against the barbarian hordes of fascism. Not the old Spain, but as Spain's great poet Antonio Machado,<sup>3</sup> who died of a broken heart the day after the fall of Barcelona, wrote :

But another Spain is born,  
A Spain of the chisel and the roller,  
With that eternal youth which springs  
Of the tough past of the race.

A Spain implacable and redeemer,  
A Spain that dawns  
With axe in hand;  
The Spain of fury and of the idea.

So for Spain he laboured feverishly, forgetting his piled-up sorrows in the work in hand. Food was urgently needed, food for innumerable refugees and women and children, food for the hard days of winter. He travelled to America and to various countries in Europe, he pleaded passionately with presidents and prime ministers for government help for the refugees, he addressed popular audiences, he pursued members of parliament and editors of newspapers, full of this one idea. For Spain

3. (1875-1939); author of *Compos de Castilla* (1912) and other books.

was not Spain only but the new world locked in a death struggle with the barbarian hordes of reaction and brutal violence.

Alas for that new Spain that did not survive the winter, murdered by those who spoke fair words to her and prated about democracy and freedom! Franco's victory parade passes by in that great city which, so proudly and for so long, held him at bay, and tearful eyes turn away remembering with a breaking of the heart the million men and women who sought to prevent this and now lie under the soil of Spain. But the ambassador of Britain's government goes to pay tribute to Franco and to greet this parade of victory.

Alas for Ernst Toller, dear friend and comrade, who died heart-broken at the perishing of his last hope! The world of fascism was too brutal for his sensitive spirit, too coarse for his fine nature. But it was democratic England and democratic France with their false promises and betrayals and stabbings in the back that broke him.

#### **46. Society, Crime and Criminals<sup>1</sup>**

I am glad to learn of the steps that are being taken to convene an All India Penal Reform Conference. I should like to associate myself with this endeavour. Crime, it is well known now, is not the result of an original sin in a criminal but is much more a product of his environment and his lack of opportunity and training. In a sense, society is to blame for producing the criminal. It is time, therefore, that society sought to understand this question and to deal with it scientifically. A proper social environment and structure should in fact almost eliminate the criminal or, at any rate, should reduce his number greatly. That perhaps is not immediately feasible, but undoubtedly much can be done towards that end. I wish the conference every success.

1. Lucknow, 25 May 1939. Message to the All India Penal Reform Conference held in Bombay on 24-25 February 1940. J.N. Papers, N.M.M.L.



## 47. Federation<sup>1</sup>

### I

One of the tragedies of history is the slowness with which people's minds adapt themselves to a changing environment. The world changes from day to day, not so our minds which are peculiarly static and insist on imagining that today is the same as yesterday and tomorrow will not differ greatly. This lag between our minds and reality prevents us from solving the problems of the day and produces war and revolution and much else that afflicts the world. The great French Revolution came bringing a tremendous release from mental bondage and for nearly a hundred years its ideas governed radical thought in Europe. And yet even before that revolution had passed into history, another revolution of vital import had begun in western Europe and was silently changing the face of things. This was the industrial revolution which has changed the world more than anything that has happened in recorded history. This mighty change was hardly noticed even by those who lived through its early stages, and the thinkers of the first half of the nineteenth century still clung to the ideas of the French Revolution. It was these ideas, already out of date to a great extent, which were of the essence of the mental atmosphere of that century of change.

So it has been throughout history, so it is today, and even the prospect of approaching catastrophe does not push us out of our mental ruts, or does so at too slow a pace to prevent that catastrophe. The war of 1914-18 and the Russian Revolution might have been considered a big enough knock on the head to make even the dull of mind think furiously. But it was not, and most people went back to the old ruts and grew angry at those who thought differently. The events that followed during the next twenty years shook everyone up, with the failure of the capitalist structure and the great depression and unemployment, the rise of fascism and Nazism and the growth of gangsterism in international affairs. Yet the shake-up was not enough. Then came the past year with all its horror and tragedy. That seems to have made some difference to many people, but do they yet realise that the remedy for the disease must be a radical one and nothing else will cure our distemper?

1. Allahabad, 27 May 1939. Article printed in *National Herald*, 31 May-1 June 1939.

In India, even more than in Europe, we are wedded to the old processes of thought, and though externally we differ from each other, the background is essentially the same. That is perhaps inevitable as our main pre-occupation must needs be nationalism and the desire to be rid of British imperialism. There is a vast difference of class and approach between the liberal in India, fearful of change, and the votaries of revolutionary violence, who hate present conditions and seek to change them at any cost.

Between the two extremes most groups of Congressmen come in and yet great as the difference is between these various groups and individuals, and governed as they are in their reactions by class and other considerations, still most of them function in much the same mental atmosphere. They quarrel amongst themselves and range themselves in opposing camps, but essentially they talk the same language and accept the same postulates. That is the trouble with our Congress governments also, which have the additional disadvantage of having to function completely in the old medium.

It is this old medium, this old method of approaching our problems, which is hopelessly out of date and incapable of producing solutions. The old political and economic structure is rotten and moth-eaten and all the king's horses and all the king's men cannot hold it together for long. We discuss the problem of the states as if it was a question of bargaining or give and take between the rulers and the people, with the paramount power taking a share of the spoils. But the states simply cannot fit in the modern world and no amount of argument or soft words can change that fundamental fact. It is on the basis of this fact, that they are out-worn, decadent systems, which should have been decently buried long ago, that all consideration must proceed. Systems like individuals have their span of life and they cannot go beyond it.

The land system again is intimately connected, or should be connected, with a modern economy. If it is not so connected it must inevitably decay, as it has done. The problem is a scientific, impersonal one and has little to do with our love for the zamindar or the tenant. It is patent that our land system is a drag on the development of the nation and impedes our progress; such systems in other countries have given place to others. So it must inevitably go here also. Objection is taken to various measures of land reform brought forward by Congress governments, and those who object do not realise where their objections lead to. These tenancy bills do not radically change the basis of the land system and all they purport to do is to give much needed relief to the peasant. They do not solve the land problem. I should like the bills to become law because the peasants hunger for



relief. But I shall not be sorry if obstruction stops them for then the issue will be clear and the final solution nearer.

This applies to every problem we have to face; we tinker about with it, hoping to ease the situation for a while. But the problem remains.

I had sat down to write about federation but my mind has strayed and led me into other directions. But the issue in every case is the same and we have to consider the question of federation from this wider and more essential standpoint—to fit the political and economical structure of India to reality in our country and the world.

It surprises me that people should talk still of federation in terms of possibility. Even those who oppose it vehemently do so obviously because they think that it might be imposed upon us. My own mind shut the door to federation long ago, not only because I disliked it but because I came to the conclusion that under present circumstances it could not come. Let me explain. I am not a prophet and, in the changing world today, it needs a very brave or a very foolish man to say what will happen. Anything may happen in India and it is a possibility that we might go to pieces and have to submit to something even worse than federation. It is not impossible that the world may be dominated for a while by fascism and all freedom crushed. We have seen that Mr. Neville Chamberlain's government is capable of every species of folly and betrayal and, so far as they are concerned, we can only expect the worst from them.

And yet I do not think that federation as proposed, or any variant of it, can come to India. People talk about it but the idea is as dead as the dodo. It is quite possible that Lord Zetland and our other preceptors have not quite realised this or, realising it, do not wish to say so. Federation cannot come to India in this shape and form because India has changed and the world has changed completely, and the age of the round table conferences is lost already in the dim mists of antiquity. If British folly seeks still to impose it upon us, it will mean deadly conflict and the break-up of much that we have in India today. The ultimate result may be good or bad for us, but it will not be the functioning of federation.

And so I think that federation cannot come. It is dead and there is no magic potion that will give it life.

## II

The question of federation has been considered by us almost entirely in terms of a conflict between Indian nationalism and desire for independence from British imperialism. That is obviously an important aspect

of it and it is clear that this conflict is inherent in it and every attempt to impose federation will bring it to the surface. We need not argue about the merits or demerits of the scheme. Enough has been said and written about it. The dominating fact is that India dislikes it utterly and will not have it. That is enough for us and it is totally immaterial what Lord Zetland and his colleagues think about it.

But there is another and a wider aspect which we must bear in mind. We have in recent years tried to consider the Indian problem in its relation to the world problem. Even if we had not done so, events would have forced us and others to this consideration. Everyone must realise that we have reached a stage when separate national solutions of any problem are ruled out as they come into conflict with a real solution. We must think in terms of the world, which has narrowed down so greatly in our own day and become an organic whole, each part of it sensitive to the other parts. More and more people realise this now and yet, as always, our minds lag behind reality. Peace is indivisible, they say; so is freedom, so is India, so is the world in any vital matter today.

Our freedom and our independence must therefore be thought of in terms of the world and of world cooperation. The days of isolated national existence are past beyond recall and the only alternative to world cooperation is world disruption and war and continuous conflicts between nations till they are all involved in a common ruin.

It is difficult to conceive of effective world cooperation at present because there are forces and powerful nations which are bent on following a contrary policy. Yet it may be possible to have the right objective and to lay the foundations of such cooperation even now, though it may not be world-wide to begin with. Intelligent opinion all over the world and vast numbers of people are eager and anxious for this to happen, but governments, vested interests and groups come in the way.

A faint glimpse of this world cooperation came to President Wilson twenty years ago and he sought to realise it. But the war treaties and the statesmen of that generation scotched the idea, and the great pile of the League of Nations rises mournfully today in Geneva like a mausoleum enshrining the dead body of a great hope. It had to die as it started under wrong auspices and with the seeds of death within. It was an attempt to stabilise something which could not endure, to protect the imperialisms and special interests of the victor nations.

Its cry for peace meant the continuation of an unjust *status quo* all over the world, its democracy was a cloak for the subjection of many peoples and nations. It had to die because it was not brave enough to live. There can be no resurrection of that dead body.



But there can be a resurrection of the idea that the League enshrined, not in the limited, twisted and perverse way that took shape in Paris and Geneva, but fuller, more powerful and organic and based on collective peace, freedom and democracy. On no other basis can it seek re-birth or find sustenance.

During the last few years there has been much talk of collective security but England and France killed it and with it the League. Faced by new dangers threatening their very existence, they are trying to find allies in case of war. But even now they do not think in terms of real collective security for peace.

This idea of collective security failed for various reasons. The main reason for this failure was its alliance with imperialism. Collective security is intimately allied to democracy and freedom and in a world where these do not exist except in limited areas, it is bound to fail. The crux of the question thus becomes, as Mr. Leonard Barnes has pointed out in his recent book, the liquidation of imperialism and the independence of India.

Many people are being driven to the conclusion that a closer cooperation between nations is essential for peace and progress. Vaguely they hanker after a world commonwealth which is something much more than a League of Nations. Some ardent Britishers imagine that the British Empire or Commonwealth of Nations offers a nucleus for this, forgetting that the basis of this empire is imperialism and exploitation of subject peoples. Even apart from the dependent part of the empire, the semi-independent dominions are loosening their bonds and tend to drift out of the imperial circle. Canada is even today, in many ways, more closely associated with the United States of America than with England. It is quite possible that this association might take political shape. In case of war, it is exceedingly doubtful if the British Empire, as such, will survive.

There are other suggestions that the nations of the British Empire should draw closer to each other and have a federal legislature. This can either mean a federation of the white part of the empire to dominate over the rest, or the complete liquidation of imperialism in India and the British colonies. In the latter event, India, by virtue of her potential resources and manpower, is likely to have a powerful influence over the other parts, which these other parts may not approve of. In any event, India cannot think in terms of the British Empire or Commonwealth, and the whole logic of history and fact is opposed to our association with a limited group like this. Today with the situation in South Africa, where our countrymen are being humiliated and crushed,

it is an insult for anyone to suggest to us that we should continue as a member of this group.

But the fact remains that world cooperation must come and the independence of all nations must be curbed in the interests of world order and peace. That cooperation cannot and should not be confined to the British group even if that was possible. Indeed to attempt to confine it so is to defeat its very purpose.

A recent book, Clarence Streit's<sup>2</sup> *Union Now*, which has attracted considerable attention, deals with this problem. Mr. Streit recommends a union of the so-called democracies. He mentions fifteen members to begin with: the United States of America, the United Kingdom, France, Canada, Australia, Ireland, South Africa, New Zealand, Belgium, Holland, Switzerland, Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Finland. These countries are supposed to form a federal union with a parliament and not merely a league or an alliance.

This conception is certainly an advance over the idea of the British Empire but it suffers from two grave defects—the exclusion of the Soviet, China and India as well as some other countries, and the silence about imperialism. That exclusion is presumably not intended to last but even so it is a bad beginning, full of dangerous possibilities. Many of the countries of this union are already semi-fascist and imperialist. They might drift towards the fascist countries and come to terms with them and oppose the Soviet and the freedom movements in China and India. No progressive union has a chance of survival today without the inclusion of the Soviet.

Nor can a real union be formed except on the basis of the ending of imperialism, otherwise the union becomes one of imperialist powers for the protection of their vested interests in subject countries. Even that they will not succeed in doing as they will quarrel among themselves. Out of imperialism, peace does not come; it is the parent of war.

A world union is necessary today. Unhappily, it will not come because those in authority are children of the old world which has ceased to be and cannot think or act in terms of the new. It will not come before the world is shattered again by war and millions have perished. But it will come because there is no other way out. Such a union can have nothing to do with imperialism or fascism and must be based on the fullest democracy and freedom, each nation having autonomy within its borders, and submitting in international matters to the union

2. (b. 1896); president, international movement for Atlantic Union from 1958; editor, *Freedom and Union* since 1946; *Union Now* was the best known of his many works on international federation.



legislature to which it sends its representatives. Inevitably it will have to work under a planned and socialised economy in order to end the conflicts of today.

To such a federal union India would gladly belong and contribute to her utmost for the peace and progress of the world. The India which belongs to it will also have her own federation, but it will be a federation very different from that mis-shapen and ill-begotten thing that is thrust upon us by Britain. To this we shall give no quarter.

#### 48. To Lady Astor<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
May 27, 1939

Dear Lady Astor,<sup>2</sup>

Thank you for your letter of the 10th May in which you told me about the steps you took regarding Gaidilieu, the girl of the Naga clan in Assam. The information I have received does not quite tally with the account that the India Office has supplied you. The girl must be an unusually interesting person if she is still supposed to be "a potent source of danger to the peace of Manipur state and the province of Assam." I should have thought that the peace of Manipur state and the province of Assam had a very insecure foundation if it rested on a girl in the twenties to be kept in prison indefinitely.

I am grateful to you for all the trouble you have taken in this matter.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. (1879-1964); Conservative M.P., 1919-45.

**49. To Gopi Nath Bardoloi<sup>1</sup>**

Allahabad  
May 30, 1939

My dear Bardoloi,

Thank you for your letter of the 22nd sending me particulars about Gaidilicu.<sup>2</sup> All this happened many years ago and the question now is how she feels about it at this stage. Would it not be possible for some person on your behalf to interview her in prison and have a good talk with her to find out what her general outlook is and what she would do if she was released? It seems that Manipur state would not like to have her. Would it be possible to make some other arrangements for her outside the state in the event of her release? A personal interview helps one to understand these matters much more than files and papers.

I am returning your papers.

I am sorry to learn that you have been unwell.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. The official papers sent by Bardoloi charged her with spreading lawlessness in Manipur state.

**50. To Anup Singh<sup>1</sup>**

Allahabad  
May 31, 1939

Dear Mr. Anup Singh,<sup>2</sup>

Thank you for your letter of May 16th. As regards my *Autobiography*, I am afraid it is hardly possible for me to add any chapters to it. This is not so much a question of time, though it is difficult enough to find the time. The book, as it is, is an organic whole finishing where it

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. (1903-1969); secretary, India League in America, and director of its research bureau, 1937-41; member, Rajya Sabha, 1952-62 and again from November 1962 to April 1964.



ought to finish. If at any time I want to add to it I might write another book. I cannot simply add a chapter or two just to bring it up to date. This can only be a record of facts which will not fit in at all with the purpose or texture of the book. If I cannot think of adding chapters, much less can I conceive of anyone else doing it.

As for the small book about me that you wish to bring out, I have of course no objection. But I do not quite know on what material you will work. If I had to write a similar book about someone else I would have considerable difficulty. You can of course go to my books, such as they are. But it is not easy to get the true background without considerable acquaintance with that background. But, as I have stated above, I have no objection whatever to your bringing out any such study if you so wish it.

I suppose there is plenty of material about, but it is difficult for me to collect it. I write frequently in the press or in magazines on current topics, but all these are spread out. Recently I wrote a series of articles which have appeared in pamphlet form. I am sending you this pamphlet.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

## 51. To Farid Ansari<sup>1</sup>

Bombay  
June 2, 1939

My dear Farid,  
Your letter.<sup>2</sup> Do not worry about my health. Look after yourself. That is your job.

I have just reached Bombay and am likely to remain here two or three weeks. Conditions in India are disheartening in many ways, but that is the state of the world today.

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. In his letter of 22 May 1939, Ansari expressed concern about Jawaharlal's reported illness. He also referred to the differences in the Congress, especially between Jawaharlal and Subhas Bose.

There is no reason why we should be pessimistic.

Yours affectionately,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

## 52. To K. Rama Rao<sup>1</sup>

Bombay  
June 4, 1939

Dear Rama Rao,

Your letter of June 1st. Why it was sent to Allahabad I do not know as you knew that I was in Bombay. I have gone through the Mainpuri papers. The most important paper—the legal notice you received—is missing and you seem to have lost it.

1. There is nothing that a newspaper should avoid so much as libel actions. It is far better not to be too generous with publishing the truth about someone's misdemeanour if this is likely to lead to a libel action. It is not enough to make sure that a truthful item is being published. You must also make sure that it is a non-libellous item. Newspapers in England have a lawyer on the staff who goes through every line from this point of view. It is bad and a tremendous nuisance for a newspaper to be dragged to a court of law. It might also result in heavy financial loss. Therefore, at all costs, avoid publication of such news. Every member of the editorial staff must realise this. Of course, if we deliberately want to risk a libel action in a matter of political or other importance, then we take a step realising the consequences. But no sub-editor has any business to involve us in trouble because of his carelessness.

2. Your correspondents must be warned that they must take particular care not to send any message of a libellous nature. Your sub-editors must also be told that they must not pass any such message. Usually the change of a word or two or the addition of 'alleged' before a charge is enough.

3. The particular Mainpuri message objected to should not have been passed as received. No sub-editor should have allowed it to be published as it is. The word 'alleged' or other qualifying words should have

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.



been used before every charge. As it is definite, charges are made without any possibility of enquiry on your part.

4. Your letters to the lawyer for the municipal board and the chairman seem to me unfortunate in tone and language. It does not matter what they wrote. In such a matter there should also never be the slightest delay in answering. The obvious answer was that you published the news in the ordinary course without any wish to be unfair, that you regret you are unable to disclose the name of your correspondent as this is opposed to journalistic ethics, and that you would gladly publish any statement by the chairman or on his behalf.

You mentioned the first two points—the third (and a very important) point was not clearly referred to, although there is indirect mention of it.

5. You should now write to the chairman or to his lawyer again briefly and courteously to this effect. It should be made perfectly clear that you are still prepared to give publicity in the *Herald* to any contradiction or statement on behalf of the chairman. But you cannot disclose the name of your correspondent as this is opposed to well-established rules and newspaper practice.

6. If in spite of all this there is recourse to a court of law then you must defend the case.

7. Inform your Mainpuri correspondent that you are not disclosing his name but, in the event of a court action, it will not be possible for him, or desirable, to maintain anonymity. In such an event, the only right course for him is to acknowledge himself that he was the sender of news. But this must come from him and not from you. Meanwhile, he should quietly and privately collect evidence to justify his message.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

**53. The Monsoon Comes to Bombay<sup>1</sup>**

I like Bombay. There is space. The sea and the cool breezes that blow in from the sea temper the heat. The harbour twinkles with many lights and the Back Bay, though it has lost its old sweep and graceful curve, is still attractive, and at night the long rows of lights make it singularly pleasing to the sight. I do not particularly fancy the new buildings that are growing up with such rapidity, and yet a distant view of these monotonous and rather dull structures is pleasing enough.

I like Bombay for the warmth of friendship that I find there. Because of this a visit to Bombay is always something I look forward to. But Bombay has lost some of its flavour, and a film of sadness covers it, since a year ago a dear friend passed away.<sup>2</sup>

Yet much as I like Bombay, I weary of it after a few days and want to get away. Used to the cold and heat of the north, accommodating myself to the cold wind as well as the scorching *loo*, I find this intermediate weather, which changes little, an enervating experience. It seems so static, so moderate, that my changing moods do not fit in with it.

I have been to Bombay so many times but I had never seen the coming of the monsoon here. I had been told and I had read that this coming of the first rains was an event in Bombay; they came with pomp and circumstance and overwhelmed the city with their lavish gift. It rains hard in most parts of India during the monsoon and we all know this. But it was different in Bombay, they said; there was a ferocity in this sudden first meeting of the rain-laden clouds with land. The dry land was lashed by the pouring torrents and converted into a temporary sea. Bombay was not static then; it became elemental, dynamic, changing.

So I looked forward to the coming of the monsoon and I became a watcher of the skies, waiting to spot the heralds that preceded the attack. A few showers came. Oh, that was nothing, I was told, the monsoon has yet to come. Heavier rains followed but I ignored them and waited for some extraordinary happening. While I waited, I learnt from various people that the monsoon had definitely come and established itself. Where was the pomp and circumstance, and the glory of the attack, and the combat between cloud and land, and the surging

1. Bombay, 15 June 1939. Article printed in *National Herald*, 18 June 1939.

Reprinted in *The Unity of India*, (London, 1941), pp. 211-212.

2. Jal Naoroggi.



and lashing sea? Like a thief in the night, the monsoon had come to Bombay, as well it might have done in Allahabad or elsewhere. Another illusion gone.

#### 54. To Edward M. Groth<sup>1</sup>

Bombay  
June 17, 1939

Dear Mr. Groth,<sup>2</sup>

Your letter of June 9th has reached me here.<sup>3</sup> I thank you for it. I am quite sure that we must consider our national problems from the larger world viewpoints.

I had read previously in the *New Republic* Rex Tugwell's<sup>4</sup> article. The copy of a radio address of Dr. Fosdick<sup>5</sup> that you have sent me is very interesting and I am in considerable sympathy with what he has said.

I have read occasionally the writings of Krishnamurti<sup>6</sup> and I met him some years back. He is a very interesting person and I am largely in agreement with what he says. I found, however, that he did not give much help in the solution of concrete problems. I shall be glad to see his recent writings.

Thanking you again for your friendly letter,

Sincerely yours,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. American consul in Calcutta.

3. He had appreciated Jawaharlal's views on world federation.

4. Rexford Guy Tugwell; professor of economics in the universities of Columbia and Chicago; served as adviser to President Roosevelt, 1933, and governor, Puerto Rico, 1941.

5. Rev. Harry Emerson Fosdick; preacher, First Presbyterian Church, New York, 1919-25, and later professor of theology at the Union Theological Seminary.

6. J. Krishnamurti (b. 1895); a spiritual leader.

**55. On Obscene Notices and Noisy Processions<sup>1</sup>**

Allahabad  
July 11, 1939

Dear Chairman,

About a year or more ago I drew your attention to the objectionable and sometimes obscene notices that were pasted or printed on public and private buildings and walls in the city. I requested you to take some immediate action to put a stop to this deplorable exhibition. I am a particular sufferer from this as my house has a long boundary wall adjoining the public road. This wall is covered by these objectionable notices. I should like to draw your attention to this matter again in the hope that something will be done speedily about it.

There is, however, another and more urgent matter to which I should like to draw your attention. It is becoming quite impossible to carry on any work on the Kamta Prasad Kackar Road or the neighbourhood because of the noisy processions that are continually passing it. These processions are meant to advertise various cinema houses and they carry some kind of a rudimentary band with them which makes the most horrid and painful noise. It is enough to upset any person with the least musical and aesthetic sense to have to put up with this infliction. It is much worse when we have to carry on some kind of work or have to address committee meetings. Our proceedings have to be suspended completely for long periods because of this unseemly noise. The whole thing has become an intolerable public nuisance. I have no objection to the cinema houses advertising themselves or their films. I have every sympathy for the cinema, though I might deplore the exceedingly low standard of many of the films. But surely the citizens of Allahabad have a right to be protected from this public nuisance which interferes with their work and occupations. I would beg of you and the board to take immediate steps to put an end to this.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. Letter to the chairman, municipal board, Allahabad. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.



## 56. The Significance of Khadi<sup>1</sup>

The Gandhi Ashram, which is the agent of the All India Spinners Association in the United Provinces, is planning a big khadi drive in the province on the occasion of Gandhi Jayanti. It is proposed to sell khadi *hundis* at least to the extent of Rs. 2,00,000 during this fortnight. I trust that all Congress committees in the province will help in this task.

Most of us in the Congress now take khadi as a matter of course and do not interest ourselves specially in its behalf. It is time that we gave it a big push ahead. The khadi organisation in this province has grown not only in size but also in efficiency, and it is capable of increasing production to almost any figure. But production depends ultimately on consumption. Therefore it is essential for consumption to be pushed, and in this every Congressman should help.

Many of us are keen on a rapid industrialisation of India and, personally, I think that it is urgently necessary for us to develop many of our key and major industries. But I do not think that this involves any conflict with a special cottage industry like khadi which the Congress has fathered and encouraged during these many years.

Khadi has shown itself to be of political, economic and social value and its significance is apparent. In these days of approaching war, khadi becomes still more important. We must remember that, if war comes, the immediate effect will be for India to have to rely on its own resources for most things.

That is a good incentive for us, but that also may result, unless we are careful, in a sudden rise of prices of mill cloth. We have short memories, but still many of us will remember the rise in prices that took place during the last war and the huge profits that the mills made then. The only way is to have an extensive production of khadi which will automatically check the rise of prices of mill cloth. Mill cloth is apparently cheaper today, but the moment there is less competition, it will soar up.

The possibility of war, therefore, increases the significance of khadi and it is up to all of us to push it, so that there is no exploitation of our workers and peasants on account of the war.

1. Statement to the press, Allahabad, 12 July 1939. *National Herald*, 13 July 1939.

It should be remembered that, when we talk of khadi, we refer to certified khadi, that is, the khadi that has been passed by the Gandhi Ashram of the Spinners Association. This is not intended to create a monopoly in khadi, but to ensure that the spinners and weavers who produce khadi get a minimum living wage.

Certified khadi means that this minimum wage has been paid to the spinners and others. To encourage uncertified khadi is to encourage sweating and payment of lower wages. It is open to any person, who manufactures khadi, to get his khadi certified after due proof that he pays the right wages and carries out the other conditions that have been laid down. It is necessary, therefore, for every person who buys khadi, to buy the right khadi, that is, certified khadi.



## GLOSSARY

Bajra	a kind of millet
Bharat Mata	mother India
Bharat Mata ki Jai	victory to mother India
Dewan	chief official of an Indian state
Hundi	a bill of exchange
Izzat	prestige
Mujtahid	a Shia Muslim high priest
Senapati	commander-in-chief
Suba Adalat	provincial court





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